



Margery Allingham

# DANCE OF THE YEARS



BLOOMSBURY READER

MARGERY ALLINGHAM

*Dance of the Years*



BLOOMSBURY READER

LONDON · NEW DELHI · NEW YORK · SYDNEY

THIS BOOK  
IS FOR  
MRS. EMILY JANE HUGHES

# Contents

*Chapter One*

*Chapter Two*

*Chapter Three*

*Chapter Four*

*Chapter Five*

*Chapter Six*

*Chapter Seven*

*Chapter Eight*

*Chapter Nine*

*Chapter Ten*

*Chapter Eleven*

*Chapter Twelve*

*Chapter Thirteen*

*Chapter Fourteen*

*Chapter Fifteen*

*Chapter Sixteen*

*Chapter Seventeen*

*Chapter Eighteen*

*Chapter Nineteen*

*Chapter Twenty*

*Chapter Twenty-one*

*Chapter Twenty-two*

*Chapter Twenty-three*

*Chapter Twenty-four*

*Chapter Twenty-five*

*Chapter Twenty-six*

*Chapter Twenty-seven*

*Chapter Twenty-eight*

*Chapter Twenty-nine*

*Chapter Thirty*

*Chapter Thirty-one*

*Chapter Thirty-two*

*Chapter Thirty-three*

A Note on the Author

## *Chapter One*

When Mr. Galantry (the one who was called “Will” or “Squire”) first saw the gypsy, she was wooding in the spinney behind the Home Farm where Jason lived. She was bent after the sticks, and there was an attractive ellipse of olive back between her bodice and her short skirt.

She was at the sapling stage then, as fine-drawn as she ever was in her life, only just formed, very strong and yet soft and warm-looking, and the hollows under one of her knees were exposed as she grovelled among the wiry grass.

Old Galantry, who was a widower, and completely alone now that his children were grown and gone, had very few illusions left about himself at that time. He knew that in twenty years he would be dead, or better dead, for he had no desire to go on living after the four-score.

The era to which he belonged was very nearly dead already. Its final pains had been upon it for the best part of his life, and to him the very smell of the world was cold and acrid with foreboding of the winter to come. He had reached the age when a man has glimpsed the end of the twisting and surprising path of his life, and has faced and recognized, if only for a minute or two in the night, either the darkness and the cold, or the sharp agony which precedes the rebirth.

Old Will Galantry saw the dark and felt the cold, and whilst it did not frighten him particularly, it made him melancholy.

He kissed the girl casually, as he had every right, just as he had a right to caress or chastise any other creature on the estate. She did not scuttle away, but stayed close to him for a moment, which both surprised and rather pleased him. He walked on for a bit, and was amused at himself for remembering that he had an old coat on. Gypsies were abominably dirty.

The dapling yellow light spilt through the leaves on to them, making a romantic picture, which made him wish again that he had built one of those little sham-classical ruins he had always promised himself since his return from the grand tour nearly thirty-five years before.

A great many people had them now, indeed they were positively common, but the idea was a charming conceit he thought, and could, if combined with the right kind of rock and fern garden, be very elegant and fitting. This kind of encounter would be dignified and romanticized by one anyhow.

The girl was walking easily and with perfect balance, a peculiarity of the wild animal and the well-bred one, he reflected, not to be found in the middle. Some of the country girls could hardly keep on their feet, they were so clumsy.

This was a very wild little thing. He could feel the life in her pouring into him almost painfully, and although it was a phenomenon with which he was not unacquainted since he had been a countryman dealing with living things nearly all his time, he noted it with particular interest because it was so strong.

She left him when they reached the end of the woodland and he felt an old man again as he went on alone. The whole thing was the most trivial of incidents; no more extraordinary than an encounter with a tame doe or an unexpectedly kind foal, of which last, to be honest, she vaguely reminded him. But he harked back to it several times as he walked back to the Hall, and at night when he sat by the fire with his bottle and his Virgil, he thought of it again.

Two or three years later (which was the time when most of them heard about it) Galantry's amused friends and infuriated relations could only suppose that the old man went a little mad that evening, but that was not true.

Galantry had no particularly remarkable brain, but what he had served him very well, and his behaviour, if inconsiderate from an outside point of view, was not illogical. Strictly from his own standpoint, it had in it a certain amount of cold, self-preservative sense. The thing so few people remembered afterwards was the recklessness of that peculiar hour.

Among the landed gentry, the conviction that the country was on the decline had been growing for some time. Galantry was not a wealthy member of the caste, but he certainly belonged to it. He had an estate worth three to four thousand a year, if no very distinguished connections save through his wife; but she was dead and her relatives not congenial to him. He was essentially a countryman, at heart a bookman, and as he sat there alone in the small library in which he had dined, he feared that the Island's

glory was dying, and not very slowly.

Politically, the situation was horrific. The turn of the century had found the country at war and alone, the sole European Power still upon its feet in the path of a military genius who ranked with Alexander. While on its throne sat a German king of pronounced and unexpectedly successful despotic tendencies, who was so convincingly, so unquestionably and publicly insane, that every now and again his subjects, albeit respectfully, put him under restraint.

Meanwhile, Pitt was seriously ill, and the French Emperor's grand army encamped on the cliffs of Boulogne was looking across the Channel consideringly.

Like many Englishmen before and since, old Galantry sat placidly in his own house, by his own fire, quite alone and quite calm, and wondered with a sort of proud exasperation, why on earth everybody else in the country was not panic-stricken and rioting. The prospect was hopeless from Galantry's point of view, enemies at the gate and God knew what inside it.

He had never considered the gradual rise of industry, which had been going on all his life-time, as a revolution, but he could not very well miss that something tremendous was happening there; the changes which had been creeping over the land secretly for years had now received such an impetus from the never-ending French wars, that their progress was visible to the most determinedly blind, which he was not. The world was changing under his nose, between green shoot and stubble. The old order was going and the new one was rolling into place, gasping so painfully, retching and suffering so wretchedly in its agonizing birth-pangs, that he might well be excused for mistaking them for death convulsions.

Galantry could do little about it. He knew that as certainly as that he was getting old. He was a cold, shy man. He was prudent; his children thought him mean. He was lazy. His servants thought him easy-going. He was a romantic, and, long ago, something of a poet. He loved books better than men now, and as a reward sat in his library alone with only the dark shelves and softly flaming candles to keep him company.

In spite of the difficult times, there was no starvation on the Groats Hall estate; he could see to that, and did so in a well-meaning if somewhat haphazard fashion. And there was life there



too, of a sort.

Jason's breeding boxes were full of the new light horses, which were replacing the heavy pack animals now that the roads were no longer mere cart-tracks needing the plough every spring. But horses do not need the amount of men which the arable land demands, and the vast open tracts of grazing at Groats asked little care.

Old Will Galantry was not a great sporting man, nor was he any great power in the district, being inclined to forget his magisterial duties. The fact was, he was finishing; he was coming quietly and he hoped decently to an end. When he died Groats would be sold. Young Will did not want it; that young man had his work cut out being a son to his wife's father far away in the West Country where three thousand acres were maturing under his prudent eye. Jack and Ben were at sea, neither of them could hope to buy the other out; while Lucius the youngest, with his practice at the Bar, was elbowing his way against the cleverer sons of poorer men, and was not likely to aspire to a country seat.

The estate was not so valuable now, either. Five daughters had taken five portions. The Yarrow Farms and the two hundred acres on the Frating side had gone over to a new farmer who was working them as though he meant to get the very life out of the earth. It had to be faced, there was no future for Groats as far as the Galantrys were concerned. The end would come quietly in ten, fifteen, maybe twenty years hence, providing always, of course, that the country squeezed and shuffled through its present difficulties.

Twenty years did not seem a long time to Galantry. Twenty miracles of the aconites bursting yellow and wet through the barren earth; twenty apple harvests; twenty short, sweet, hot summers; twenty Christmases; twenty, only twenty; and each solid pleasure in life growing fainter as his own powers failed, and then, nothing.

This was the general background to his mind at that time, but the peculiar and particular virtue of that actual moment, the essence of its sudden youth and headstrong impulsiveness, lay in something else.

Just now, and for a little while, the country was in physical danger, and was reacting to the phenomenon in its own oddly exalted way. This was the hour of freedom. This was the psychological moment when the very stones cried out; that magical, dangerous, instinctive time when land and people, dead earth and

quick earth, seemed to fuse and stand solid, age, possessions, degrees and prudence, all forgotten in one glorious, unanimous bellow of exuberant defiance.

Galantry felt this deep national exultation. He approved it and thanked God for it with that kind of wondering satisfaction with which cold people warm their hands at an unexpected fire on their own heart's hearth. But he felt the heat through an insulating glove; having had unlimited time for thought all his life, he had done a little thinking and he saw now that the flame was emotional and probably ephemeral. All the same the phenomenon had an effect upon him. The effect which the 'days of power' had on Galantry was to make him feel released from something. His responsibilities at first felt less heavy, and then began most dangerously to look downright silly.

So, stripped of what was after all the fairly light harness of the conventional worries and repressions of a comfortable and still eighteenth-century life, he saw himself briefly for what he was inside—a cold, rightly deserted old man, with a strong vein of sensuousness, and a thin vein of poetry in him. And twenty declining years with which to do whatever he liked in a crumbling world.

He had taken a length of dead branch out of the wood box during these considerings. It was still damp, he noticed, and the lichen on the bark was still green. As he thrust it among the red castles and valleys in the fire, he thought seriously about the gypsy and her rare, revitalizing warmth. The trouble was, of course, she would run away....

It is probable that in normal conditions the staggering notion of marrying her would never have occurred to him, but just then, just in those few weeks of power, when everybody in the land was thinking in terms of what could, rather than what ought to be done, it did not seem any more absurd than many of the other practical but unconventional shifts which were being put into practice all over the place.

Old Galantry knew a little about the gypsies and their mysterious ways. At one time he had considered them a romantic tribe, but that was a delusion from which he had recovered on making their acquaintance. He knew that if the girl was one of the Smith tribe, as he thought she was, she would find no refuge among her own people if she deserted a lawfully wedded husband, especially if he

were a man of authority. Moreover, the law of the land still gave a man pretty nearly absolute powers over his wife. Once he married her there would be no humiliating running away.

That, as near as can be set down on paper, is the truth of what happened to Galantry, and how he came to do what he did, and why the child was so dark. It made a tremendous amount of trouble from the beginning.

The gypsies were not only considered by the entire countryside to be unfit for civilized society, but some of them were; and when Jason remarked that "the old fellow might as well have married a pig," he spoke with that awful reasonableness and complete disregard for anybody or anything but his own honest opinion, which the East Country folk have always possessed.

Shulie (everybody knew what that was short for and it did not help, although it made old Galantry laugh) never took kindly to the house, and was sullen and dirty in it, but she was given to sudden fits of exalted happiness when in the open air, and would sometimes stand in the wind with her arms thrown out, her full breasts bursting at her bodice, and her dark hair, which was oily and curling, blowing out behind her. She was very young and some people were half sorry for her at those times, but their pity did not last because, although docile, she really was abominably uncouth. Also, of course, the 'days of power' passed.

At the time, Galantry told nobody outside his own household, and managed the thing very quietly. He had no near neighbours that winter, while the country folk were so deeply and completely shocked that they kept the story comparatively dark, fearing it might somehow reflect disgrace on the very district. In self-defence they altered the facts a little, too, and spoke primly of 'a young country person.' Thus, quite unconsciously, giving the impression that Galantry had gone soft in old age, and had married one of his own maidservants. This was a jolly story, but better than the truth, which struck nobody as funny.

Shulie was thrust into a decent stuff dress, which came down to the slippers she would keep discarding. In the end they kept her out of sight as much as possible, but by the time the first family had even heard of the marriage, and came rushing down in panic to find it legal and unalterable, she was seven months with child; while old Galantry, although in undisputable possession of his senses, was delighted and tremendously amused and proud of himself.

## *Chapter Two*

It was six years now since the first Mrs. Galantry had been carried down the hill to the churchyard, and ever since that day Dorothy Holding, who was a maid at five pounds a year and all found, had been the actual mistress of Groats. In a sense, she had held the office before then, but nobody ever suggested that she did not know her place.

The fact was that the first Mrs. Galantry had been a charming little woman with about as much sense at fifty as she had possessed at fourteen. She had had china-blue eyes, a lovely shape, no energy whatever, great obstinacy, and a totally erroneous theory that was she a natural blue-stocking. Her main affectation, this pretention to a rare, God-given appreciation of letters, persisted all her life. She confused it with an accomplishment and treated it as if it had been a neat way with a song, or a knack of doing her hair.

In fact, she flourished it prettily. She brought it out in the evening before guests, taught her children to imagine it was far more mysterious and important than it could ever have been if genuine, and generally played the goat with it in a way which amused her husband in his youth, embarrassed him in his middle age, and later on filled him with fury.

However, quite apart from her intellectual pretensions, the good lady was no housekeeper, and did not even pretend to be one, which was at least original in her, for at that time the attribute was not only fashionable, but essential, if a woman was to be mistress in her own house.

In the wilds surrounding Groats, every winter was a time of siege. The parishes round about had not done their duty by the roads, and as yet the very new macadamming had come nowhere near them. When the first heavy rains turned the clay to a quagmire, Groats was practically cut off from wheeled traffic. Somebody had to keep the machinery of civilized living going, and gradually Dorothy Holding, who had begun work in the dairy when she was seven, and had risen slowly to be housekeeper, took more and more responsibility for the general comfort. When the first Mrs. Galantry died, she took it all.

Dorothy was born for it. She was one of those women who remain unaltered by any change in the social life of the century. In Saxon hall, Caroline still-room, or the manager's room in the latest block of service flats, wherever or whenever a large household has had to be fed, cleaned, bedded and controlled, one of the Dorothy Holdings of the world has bustled there, secret, single-minded, and quite extraordinarily powerful.

In the end, whatever the theories of civilized living, the answer lies in them. Fly to the secret parts of the earth and they are there, looking out casually and with preoccupied eyes from the doorways of the largest huts; come back to the newest communal feeding centre and they are there again, selfless, untiring, thinking of something else. They are the ultimate bosses whenever man pauses for a moment in his hag-ridden experimenting to enjoy the earth.

Old Galantry was always saying this sort of thing to Dorothy, making fun of her cautiously, as intellectual men do of practical women of whom they are more than half terrified. His favourite remark was that when the world ended, and all the dead arose prodigiously hungry no doubt, since their humanity was to be restored to them, some helpful person would be certain to set about directing a fair and orderly distribution of the loaves and fishes, and that that person, as sure as God made little apples, would be Dorothy Holding.

She never responded to this in any way, and her silence used to disconcert him. He would try to re-establish his superiority by marvelling to himself at her stupidity, but he was never quite sure how much of a fool she was.

At the time he married the gypsy, Dorothy was forty-two and at her zenith. She had not much affection for Galantry, rather a sort of tolerant acceptance. He sat on the top of her world indolently, like a nodding carter on a waggon-load of sacks. The marriage astounded and shocked her, but it did not demoralize her. Immediately she made it her business to see it did no such thing to the rest of the household either.

The news was not broken to her gently. Galantry sent for her on the night it happened, when the parson and the girl's father were still in the house. Since he was bothered if he could think of one, he offered no explanation or excuse, but related the fact and watched her face for any change of expression. To his relief it remained as wooden as one of the carved apples over the mantel. Her eyes

flickered once, but with that obstinate wistfulness, which is now called wishful thinking, he put it down to the candles in the draught.

When he had finished speaking, he pulled Shulie out from behind his chair, and handed her over to be cared for. There was only a moment's mutual appraisement between the two women. Dorothy was not good-looking then or ever; she was over tall, very flat, and hard fleshed as a man. The pretty, bunchy fashion designed to look well on the matron, whatever her condition, did not suit her. Her clothes hung round her bones disconsolately, and her face was hard and brown and tight-looking under its frill of calico.

To Shulie she looked terrible in the true Old Testament sense.

Meanwhile, Dorothy, on the other hand, saw a full-blooded, barefoot gypsy, and had she seen a negress she must have received very much the same shock.

Sir Walter Scott had shed no mantle of romance over the Romanys at that time, and the Sheriff would have had his work cut out to convince Miss Holding at any period. Dorothy had been on close, but not neighbourly terms with the gypsies all her life, and what she knew of them led her to suppose that they were predestined by God to be dirty, to lie and to steal, and therefore as night follows day, by man to be hanged, hunted or deported. However, like most country people, her instinct was to seize rather than to explode, so she stepped to one side and gave Galantry a brief bob.

"This way," she said to Shulie, and her voice betrayed nothing whatever.

The girl did not move, so Galantry got up and led her to the door. She went with him quite docilely, without glancing behind her. On the threshold of the dark hall there was a momentary hitch, but Miss Holding suddenly flounced out her skirts, and all but swept the gypsy from the room by sheer force of the draught.

Groats was not a large household at the time. With the departure of Galantry's elder children much of the bustle had gone from the place, but there was a sizable kitchen-full of inside servants.

As Dorothy drove Shulie up the broad, shallow stair to the parlour, where she proposed to install her while she collected herself, she held all the household personalities in her mind. There was Donald the coachman, and Richard, the Master's own man, his

wife Estah, who was the cook, Peg her scullion, and Sarah the young chamber-maid. Richard had been silent and hang-dog for days, so he had already been told in confidence no doubt. Estah would be ruled by him in this as in all else. Donald, Dorothy could manage—he was a good soul, stolid and slow thinking. Peg mattered less than nothing, being scarce better than a gypso herself, but Sarah might make trouble.

Sarah was young, sly and quick-witted, quite capable of taking advantage of a situation breathing disruption. It was quite possible that she would get hold of this creature, coax her, pet her, sponge on her, and range herself on the destroying side. Very likely Sarah would have to go.

It was typical of Dorothy that she should have reacted in this intensely practical way, even when in a condition of shock. Her concern was the preservation of the house and all it contained or stood for. She had noticed some of the unrest of the hour with deep animal misgiving. She did not think much about outside things, but she felt them, and when they threatened her castle, she was the first to smell the smoke.

Unrest was abroad, danger, excitement; all bad things for a home.

She knew well enough what was going on—Change. Change deep and irrevocable. Change as inescapable, as relentless and as painful as the change from youth to middle age. She hated it and feared it and dreaded it, and knew it would come.

In the parlour the candles guttered as the door swung gustily, and the two women went in. It was a pretty room and not without elegance. Red silk damask flowed round the windows, and picked up the strawberries on the chintz and the blush in the heathen signs on the carpet. To Shulie it looked like a great half-full trunk of treasures with the lid shut down.

Dorothy stepped forward to take a spill from the mantelshelf with which to light the rest of the candles, which were prudently kept dark whenever the room was not in actual use, and while she was so occupied she had to take her eyes off the girl. She still barred the way to the door though, and in the moment the gypsy passed her she caught a glimpse of the frightened face and wild outdoor eyes.

Shulie made no noise at all, she went like a shadow. Not out of

the house, but down the stairs, across the hall, and into the library to Galantry again. Once there she stood very close to him. She was shaking violently, and the pulses at the hinges of her jaws showed clearly and piteously.

Old Galantry, who was a cold man for all his passions, felt once again the life in her, and a flood of unusual tenderness brought colour to his thin face. As he put his arm round her, it occurred to him that he was holding her up so that she could not hide *under* his chair. The notion amused him, but it also touched some nearly atrophied flame of generosity very deep in him, and shook for once into glorious youthful uncertainty, the merciless boredom of his self-knowledge. His gratitude to Shulie was sudden, overwhelming and pathetic.

He dismissed Dorothy when she came running down in a flutter. She saw he was a little shamefaced at the weakness, but she went off obediently, still without any sign whatever on her tight-skinned face.

Galantry was highly relieved. He put her down as even more the stolid, faithful fool than he had thought, and was grateful. He reflected that she probably thought he had gone a little mad, and for her own sake was being indulgently reticent about it. Meanwhile he had Shulie within his arm.

All the same he had under-estimated Dorothy, who had not thought for a moment that he had lost his mind. Later that evening she told Richard what she did think, and they stood gloomily together considering it, one on either side of a barrel in the stillroom. They were two gaunt country people, and they had all the wisdom and perception of eight hundred years' experience of simple, civilized living behind their hard, expressionless eyes.

"Because of the war he's thought he could do what he likes," said Dorothy, and Richard nodded in grave agreement.

As a remark, it did not sound particularly fresh or profound, but they were neither of them people of much talk, and all the upheaval, all the dangerous unleashings and disintegrations of war passed as a fear through them when Dorothy spoke the word. When she said "what he likes," in spite of her quick, flat tone, the phrase to Richard summed up all the lust, all the recklessness, all the impropriety and all the selfishness of generations of lonely old men.



## Chapter Three

All that was in the autumn of one year. By spring eighteen months later the reckless hour had passed completely. More and more evidences of the general trend which the social life of the land was taking so fast had filtered down as far as Groats. If the world was going to come to an end, it was going to do it in an odour of propriety apparently. Old Galantry damned it for its censoriousness, its narrow-mindedness, and its growing tendency to poke its nose into a gentleman's private affairs.

He was standing at the end of the drive at the time, under the oaks which were budding yellow and hopeful. Far down the cart track road a coach was lumbering away from him. In it sat Libby, his youngest daughter, and she was in tears, he knew. She was the last of his children to come and see if it really were true, and it was, so there they all were.

When he was not infuriated by it, his children's reactions to his second marriage amused Galantry, and made him feel young and mischievous. Certainly he had upset them all. The coming child had finished it. That had got under their skins, and their irritation was not all to do with their loss of money by any means.

Poor Libby; he liked her the best of all his daughters, in spite of her mute reproach. Of all her mother's children she had more of his mind. She did know a little about the Arts of which she talked so freely, and that, thank God, was a change.

He was very glad he had had her so well educated. Her husband was an M.P. He was dull and considerably her senior, but he looked after her well and appeared to appreciate her. Libby was all right. What had she to cry about when she saw her father happy?

To old Galantry the amazing thing was that he was happy; extraordinarily happy. He had even written a little again too. At first he had been inclined to suspect this particular aspect of his rejuvenation since it smacked a little of a pathetic second adolescence. And that embarrassed him even while it made him laugh. All the same, he remembered, he had never been without talent. His collected poems, published in his early middle-age, had been very successful. His youthful "*Why should I so soon despair ...*"

had been very much admired, and seemed likely to pass into the lighter verse of the language. Certainly this brief glory had been offset somewhat by the annoyance he had caused with the controversial essay he wrote for the *Quarterly*, espousing very dully the old theory that the works of Homer were by several different hands. This had involved him in some vigorous correspondence; some of it downright abusive.

However, of recent years, he had done very little; his pen had grown heavy, his paper uninviting. Yet now, when the only way to escape Shulie's invigorating presence was to shut himself up in the library, energy had returned and the blood had crept once again into the fernery of the secret places of his skull. Still, literary aspirations aside, the important thing was that for the first time in his whole life he felt completed. Shulie was his complement.

It was not her intellectual attainments which so added to him, God knew. At one time, he had toyed with the idea of teaching her to read Latin, since the notion of a young woman who could read nothing but that language amused him. But having begun by trying to teach her the alphabet, he had come up against something quite new in his experience. Anyone who has ever tried to teach a very intelligent and willing dog to talk must have had something of the same enlightenment.

Shulie could make rings round him in many ways, but the alphabet was not in her range. She had her own methods of communication. Yet his gain from her was not only physical. She widened and stretched his mind, sharpened his perception, and opened a hitherto undiscovered corner of the world to him. No, he thought, it was no good anyone arguing with him, strange though it was, absurd and inconvenient though it might be; he, Will Galantry, was with Shulie by his side a complete and finished human entity; a man capable of living in, and enjoying that small corner of the world in which he had been destined to take his own particular part in the Round Dance of God.

Inconvenient it certainly was at times. Shulie was no figure of fantasy, no poet's dream. Shulie was what she was, Heaven help her. Sometimes old Galantry realized with dismay that he must have been constructed very far one way from the normal to need a complement so distant in the other.

He turned back from the gate and glanced down the drive expectantly. The young laurels were growing well and the corner of

the rose-brick house showed warm, if formal, in the clean, clear morning. Its legal mistress was not visible, but Galantry guessed she was near, and presently he called her.

After a while, she came out from behind the whitethorn hedge which flanked the laurels, and he realized she had been waiting there until Libby had safely gone. The two women had just met, but that was all. After the first almost silent inspection, Shulie had disappeared from Libby's sight, and had kept out of it. It was odd behaviour in her, but sensible and not without dignity.

At the moment he saw at a glance she was in one of her delighted moods. These were completely natural, and followed any period of restraint. She was very near her time, and looked ridiculously burdened in her full dress, like a child with a bundle of washing.

She had tied a bit of coloured stuff round her neck again. Galantry saw it with despair. He was not at all sure it was not a piece of one of his first wife's evening gowns; it looked familiar. Also, she was dirty again. Her hands and face were smudged, and the wet grasses had dragged her skirt to the knees.

"Good God, woman, you'll take a fever!" In spite of his alarm, Galantry did not put the rebuke he intended into his voice. It was nearly half his own fault she did not obey him, he reflected irritably. If he could only school himself, he might train her a little. His expression betrayed him. She followed his thought and laughed, and lifting her skirts came over the tussocks towards him. Then he was furious. She was bare-foot again, and the grass was drenching. It was a cold spring.

"The child, Shulie," he protested in helpless terror, lest he should lose her. "Think of the child."

She stopped and stood looking at him with all the knowingness and all the contempt of the outdoor creature on its own safe ground showing in her broad, brown face. She was the master in this situation.

In spite of, or perhaps because of her pregnancy, she was radiant. There was in her none of the heavy-eyed weariness of the domestic animal in the same physical state.

"Shulie!" commanded Galantry in sudden rage.

She turned away from him then and disappeared among the shrubbery. Presently he saw her out on the path again. She was

going away from him and was stumping along with exaggerated awkwardness in shoes which she was pretending were too tight.

She had taken them off behind the hedge while she was waiting for Libby to go, and must have hidden them there.

It occurred to Galantry once more as he watched her, how inspired he had been to marry her, and thus purchase her loyalty. In any lesser position she would have led him an abominable dance.

Having had some experience by this time, he ignored her, and turning back, wandered down the path again towards the gate. In a little while he felt her cheek rubbing against his shoulder. She was carrying her shoes in her hand.

He took no notice of her, and after they had continued some way in silence, she began to wheedle him. This was an extraordinary performance of hers, and Galantry was never tired of hearing it. As far as he could gather, the words meant nothing whatever, or at any rate they were the least part of the charm. Taken as a communication, the things she actually said were ridiculous.

“Don’t be angry, my dear, my gorgeous. Don’t be angry, my lovely one, my sweet, my master, my King of Egypt, my little one, my darling, my young pig, my great one. Don’t be angry. Don’t be angry. Don’t be angry. Think of something else. Think of the day. Think of the air. Think of the smells. Don’t be angry. Don’t be angry. Think of Shulie. Think of warm Shulie. Don’t be angry. Don’t be angry....”

She had a naturally soft voice, without as yet, the Romany whine in it, and Galantry had improved her English. Her chant was monotonous and curiously soporific.

The harangue could go on for eight minutes, as he had found out once with his stop-watch; a private experiment which had tickled him immensely. But the flow, with its endless repetitions and occasional innocent indencies, was but the vehicle. The potency of the performance lay in something purely physical. The urgency of her pleading was a force quite as strong and very nearly as actual as a warm wind, and quite as innocently sensuous as the purring of a leg-rubbing cat.

If one was not vastly, mentally superior to it, and old enough to be more or less insulated against it, it would have been an alarming thing, Galantry thought. As it was, he found it charming and oddly pathetic.

“Oh, Shulie,” he said, laughing, “if I were a younger man....”

She wriggled free of him, and lifted a face which shone with life and unschooled intelligence.

“Then you would hit me,” she said.

Old Galantry stiffened. It was quite true. She was literally right. Hot blood, young blood, God save him, ordinary blood, would rebel at this elemental coquetry. There was no error in Shulie, no disease, no wrong, nothing even strange. It was he who was removed from Nature. All his superiority over her so vast from one point of view was suddenly made negative when seen from this other angle. In fact, there was, there must be another enormous half of life of which he still knew very little.

Galantry did not altogether like this idea, and he thrust the thought out of his head, while Shulie, quick to realize she had not pleased, but without knowing in the least why, took the only course known to her and began her outrageous begging again. After a while, they wandered on happily together through the yellow, green and white of that brilliant spring.

That was the real beginning of the incident which set the whole countryside by the ears, and which was to be reported everywhere where horse and carter should pause, for years afterwards.

It happened, as that sort of thing so often does, almost as if it were prearranged. Everybody behaving quite normally, and only the combination of their separate natural reactions making the unfortunate whole.

An hour traipsing round the wet grounds in Shulie's wake made Galantry himself considerably dishevelled, while she succeeded in getting into the kind of mess which a spaniel achieves in the same pursuit. They were neither of them fashionably dressed, and that was unfortunate, since the older modes were most susceptible to disarray. Beau Brummel was as yet a young man, and his chastening influence had scarcely touched the fashionable world, much less reached Groats.

Galantry's mulberry-coloured coat and breeches and gay striped waistcoat showed the wet. His stockings became rouled, and the ribbon which tied his queue had pulled astray, so that it hung in a rat-tail.

Shulie's green and yellow lute-string was wringing from hem to thighs, and was torn and dragged. The string of frayed rag round

her neck had slipped round her ear, and she exposed as much plump, brown bosom as would be decent at a ball, but nowhere else. There were twigs and dead leaves in her wind-matted hair, and her shoes still hung from her hand.

They approached the house from the side, and came in noisily through the garden door into the central hall.

Galantry was laughing and his haggard face was unusually flushed as his wife dragged him along. Shulie was in an impossible mood. She was screaming, wildly excited as usual by the comparatively rare freedom of the open air. Together they made one of those pictures which no painter has been able to romanticize. Jan van Steen might have done something kindly with it, and would no doubt have stuck his own great cheerful, beery face in some dark corner to make all friendly. But as it turned out on this occasion, it became a Hogarth, child truthful, and not very pleasant, for there were two more figures to go into it.

As the pair reached the hall, Richard was just admitting Sir Lionel Bretton of Mundham and his mother; two visitors, come on a formal morning call.

The Brettons were from the other side of the river, and were old acquaintances of the Galantrys. The two families had been on chatting terms for a couple of generations at least, but had never had anything, save the district, in common; although before her marriage the now widowed Lady Bretton had numbered Galantry among her beaux. However, his had only been a half-hearted entry, and they had never been friends.

Young Bretton Galantry always had disliked, because he reminded him vividly of his father. He had come over to Groats on some flimsy pretext once before since Galantry's second marriage, and then, as now, his full-blooded face had glowed with the anxious curiosity of the under-entertained. On that occasion he had missed Shulie. But Galantry had guessed his inquisitive purpose, which after all did not take much detecting.

The greetings were formal, and inclined to be constrained. Shulie alone was unprotected, and she became very quiet.

Galantry had no idea that he was dishevelled, and he acquitted himself well until he rose from bowing over Jane Bretton's hand to come face to face with himself in the hall mirror behind her. The apparition disconcerted him, as well it might, and he stiffened.

Lady Bretton noticed it, and responded in her own way.

It was five years since she had seen Galantry, and in that time her hair had greyed, and to her intense mortification one of her side-front teeth had fallen out. These things were uppermost in her mind, naturally, and when she missed the gallant response which she had hitherto always awakened in Galantry it hurt her considerably.

She slid into her second rôle, as older women do, and became the sturdy matron of dignity and experience, and it was only then that she saw what a state he was in. After that, her eyes strayed curiously to Shulie.

By this time the second Mrs. Galantry was something to look at. Her sullenness had chased all the charm out of her, and she remained unrelievedly dirty, ragged, wet, and of course, very pregnant. There were the marks of her bare feet on the flags behind her, and after a full moment of startled scrutiny (during which she took in some half dozen different facts, each of them well-nigh incredible), Lady Bretton changed her mood again.

She blushed deeply, and turning to her son she commanded him briefly to go out to the horses. When he had gone, she strode to Shulie's side and led her firmly on to the hearth-rug. Only then did she turn on Galantry.

"How you dare," she said. "You with eight children already. Good God, man, what are you thinking about? Do you want to lose them both? Where's Dorothy Holding?"

Before this great natural blast, away went all the frippery.

Lady Bretton's curiosity and neighbourly malice fled before the wind, and with it went Galantry's resentment. He became terrified and inclined to dither, while she remained furious, slightly frightened, and determined to fuss.

Shulie stood, as she always did when thoroughly alarmed, quite still, with utter stupidity in every line of her.

Dorothy was sent for, and arrived very nearly as sullen as Shulie. Her contempt for Galantry for putting himself and the household in such a light before a neighbour was hidden, but it was very strong and it sat in her, making itself felt by sheer force of its personality. She, too, was frightened. Her knowledge of the things that could go wrong with the human body was enormous, and one look at Shulie convinced her that the girl was asking for an internal chill, fever,

complications in her delivery, and therefore, at that day and location, pretty well certain death.

All the same, she could have strangled Galantry, for the bed chamber had not been inspected by her for some days, and heaven alone knew into what condition Betty, Sarah's stupid successor, had let it degenerate.

Lady Bretton might be a woman of title, but in Dorothy's opinion she was unlikely to be above domestic gossip, and it would be a fine thing if the whole county heard a description of ragged bed curtains, soiled valances, and unpolished floors. She did her best in a wooden, obstinate way, to prevent the visitor mounting the stairs, but she might as well have attempted to control the spirit of righteous indignation itself.

Shulie was got to bed by Lady Bretton in person, and the bedroom justified Dorothy's worst misgivings. Not only was Shulie about as tidy as a bear, but she had no sense at all of the fitness of things. If she was cold, she covered herself with the nearest thing, blanket, hearth-rug or towel, but she was also full of little ingenuities. If she needed more light, it would probably not occur to her to draw the window curtains. The chances were she would twist a corner into a string, and loop the whole drapery to a nail in a beam. Moreover, if she did not like a thing, she would push it away from her, if possible out of sight.

There was a small portrait of Galantry's mother, which she particularly detested, and as Dorothy entered, the first thing she noticed across the general rag fair was the canvas hanging lopsided, and face to the wall over the chimney.

It was the bed which most startled Lady Bretton. This was a very ornate affair, brought over from France during the disturbances. It was gilt and baroque, and the crimson silk hangings were ancient and luxurious. Shulie liked red, but not curtains round her head, so she had bundled them all up on top, leaving the structure looking somehow like a tragedy queen who had screwed up her hair for the bath. The posts were not altogether naked, for the arms of the two gilt amoretti in the centre of the two at the foot had been utilized as hangers for a remarkable collection of garments of every period, Shulie having discovered the family old clothes chest.

Still, there was more to do than gape. Dorothy stirred up the entire household. Amid a fine ringing of bells, stumblings,



clatterings, splashings, whisperings, and the rattle of heels, Shulie was warmed before a blazing fire of green ash. She was plied with hot bags, given a mustard foot bath, and forced to drink a steaming posset, which tasted sharp and aromatic, and had twigs of rosemary floating in it. She was stripped, too, and stuffed into a clean flannel night-gown. It took some time to find this, and Jane Bretton's sharp order for them to bring 'the one she wore last night' brought a flush to Dorothy's cheeks, but not of course to Shulie's.

The cause of the commotion sat with her head bent, and only her shiny black eyes alive and anxious.

Finding the second Mrs. Galantry was apparently unable to speak, save in monosyllables, Jane Bretton assumed, quite unjustifiably, that she was also unable to think, and promptly began to talk of her as though she was not there.

She took Dorothy through the arrangements which had been made for the coming event, and made forthright, if well-meaning comment on the sullen recital. The more she heard, the more dissatisfied she was, and the more sensational loomed, in Dorothy's accurate imagination, the story she must spread as soon as she got back to her own circle.

As the interview proceeded, Jane Bretton grew less and less conscious of Shulie as a person. After the girl's shaken head had convinced her that not even the approximate date when the birth might be expected had been worked out, or even considered, she came to the shocking conclusion that Galantry's second wife really was a half-wit, and her sense of outrage grew. So also did her senses of charity and responsibility, and, unfortunately, drama.

The village midwife came under her survey. Who was the woman? What was known of her? It was all very well Dorothy talking glibly, but was she known to be clean, capable, no drinker, not too old? Was she honest, healthy, experienced? What had Doctor Wild to say? Doctor Wild had not been consulted? Good heavens, what kind of a household was this? Were they all mad? Whatever the child might be destined to be, whatever they might think or feel, had they the right to indulge in downright neglect? Fortunately there was always God. It was a blessed miracle that she, Jane Bretton, had been directed, positively directed, to ride twenty miles through the mire of the spring in the very nick of time.

Someone must ride down and bring up the midwife immediately,

for in conscience she would not be able to leave the house herself until she was satisfied that the woman was at least more blessed with intelligence than the miserable wretches with which she so plainly saw Groats was entirely inhabited. She would call on the Doctor herself, as she rode home. And now, as to linen....

It would not be true to suggest that poor Jane Bretton did not enjoy much of her own performance, but she did not put it on entirely for self-entertainment. She was a nice woman, capable in her own limited way, and she herself had suffered a great deal in child-bed.

Dorothy misjudged her utterly when she put down her behaviour solely to a desire to get even with Galantry for not renewing his suit of thirty-five years before.

The person who suffered most was Galantry himself. Embarrassment, irritation, and above all, a fear of losing Shulie, which astonished him because it was so much more violent than anything of the sort he had felt in his youth, made a very old man of him. He dithered and trembled, talked rubbish to young Bretton, left the young man abruptly to stride halfway upstairs, changed his mind and came down to the hall, went up again, knocked, and was sent away; waited on the staircase, pulled himself together and went out hatless into the air; came back again, and snapped the stem of his wineglass as he raised it to his guest.

The midwife was brought at last, and Jane Bretton interviewed her in front of Shulie. This was a thing which could never have happened had Shulie betrayed any intelligence. But she sat, looking worse than stupid, and they forgot her as anything but an object to be discussed.

The midwife was a neat, sharp-faced woman, with a scrubbed skin and a bleached apron, and she was anxious to convince Her Ladyship that she knew her job. She was of the better sort, as the village put it, and she was anxious to convey that, too. Jane Bretton, on the other hand, was determined to keep her in her place, and the effect of the lack of response on the one hand, together with the effort on the other, resulted in the good lady producing a vivid account of all the more difficult cases in which she had been involved over a period of twenty years. Obstetrical surgery was in a monstrous infancy at that time, and when at last the recital ceased, and Shulie was bundled into the great bed, and the red curtains were pulled down with a shower of dust and were

shrouded into a dark, crimson tent round her, she lay very still.

She was unnaturally quiet all day, and even Dorothy felt a vague pity for her when she carried up her food. But there was too much to forgive altogether. Dorothy stayed long enough to take down the sheaves of petticoats which hung from the putti's outstretched arms, and to thrust them into the press in the corner. But she did not speak. She knew the midwife would return at nightfall, and that the Doctor would ride over in the morning. These were the people whose job it was to look after the girl. Dorothy decided to leave it to them.

Old Galantry, fresh from his harrowing morning with the visitors, came in and looked at his wife. He was exhausted. He had caught cold himself, and had been confronted flatly with one of the disadvantages of his marriage, which he had been ignoring with determined obstinacy for some time. Also, he was averse to suffering, even in his best moments. The pain of his love and need for Shulie had been brought home to him, and had affronted as well as hurt him. He did not like to see her lying so quiet, and in a condition which was, although properly enough, yet his fault. So he kissed her, rubbed her head with his hand, missed the wave of living energy from her, which appeared to have been switched off like a light, and went away again.

Shulie waited until the sunset faded and the big, solid chunks of furniture misted in the far corners of the room. She had not taken in much of the horror of the midwife's recital, but now she was uneasy; things were about to happen to her, and they were deep, important things, of which she knew far more than anyone dreamed. Her loneliness gave her great strength, and an enormous fund of courage and secret excitement. It also sharpened her wits, which were never dull.

She hated the red curtains. They had hung round many scenes of illness in their time, and had never been washed for fear of disturbing the dye. They were hung out in the air once a year certainly, but not in the sun. The old Frenchman for whom they had been made had died of his sins amid them. Many children had been born within their comfortable, fuggy folds, and the first Mrs. Galantry had had her last fever under them.

Shulie knew nothing of this, and would have thought little of it if she had. But she did not like the curtains. Had she analysed her mistrust, she would have said she thought they were unlucky.

She had very keen hearing, and thought nothing of that either. Lying in the big room, up two flights of stairs, she yet knew quite well where everybody was in the house, because she could hear them quite distinctly. She heard Galantry kick the log on his study fire, and knew by the faintness of the sound that the door was shut. She heard Dorothy talking in the kitchen on the far side of the building. The voice came in at the window, so all the service doors were closed. There was nothing else to listen to, nothing but the clocks and the rustling of the fire.

Shulie got out of bed and put a clean cotton gown over her nightdress, and a petticoat over that. There was another petticoat among the things which Dorothy had folded away; it was very old, partly quilted, and had been designed to be worn with a haunch hoop, so that it was very wide. Shulie had taken a great fancy to it. It was of pale green satin, washed nearly white, and was lined at the back with a coloured cotton stripe, not quite suitable, but well enough for underneath in seventeen-fifty, when it was new.

Shulie found it. She made not even a superficial attempt to tidy after her, but stepped over the riot of garments with it over her arm and went out like a sigh through the house.

She was in some uneasy pain now, and hurried.

Nobody saw her go, and no one was very anxious to spread the news of her departure when at last it was noticed nearly an hour and a half later.

Jane Bretton was safely back at Mundham by then, but the midwife proved nearly as much of a trial to Dorothy, who was still obsessed with the *amour propre* of the house.

At Groats there was at first a moment of complete panic. Just for a little while, even the secret solaces had not yet popped up in country minds to lighten the blow. Just for a while, the awful natural delight in any diversion, however alarming, and the fleeting hope so wicked and so ashamed, that this source of disgrace might die and vanish for ever, had not crept into their thoughts. For a moment everybody paused blankly.

Old Galantry surprised and comforted everybody by keeping his head, and in that he was alone. From somewhere he fished up a power of quiet leadership no one had ever suspected in him before, and he was remarkably composed and matter of fact. It was he who whipped them all into action, and they were not an easy team.

Dorothy was mulish; the midwife alternately happily hysterical and ghoulishly prophetic; the other women, made self-important by the nature of the crisis, were knowing and smug; while of the two men servants, Richard was dour and liable to be almost openly angry, and Donald, a simpler soul, was eager to get his dog, which was a wonderfully good pointer, into the chase, but was yet vaguely aware that somehow or other that would not do.

It was a fine, cold night with a full moon rising, and after some three hours of the hunt, Richard came up to his master, who was standing on the lawn in his riding cloak.

Old Galantry was looking much younger in the moonlight; he was very grave, and the light wind was ruffling his hair. Richard hesitated. At last he said very quietly:

“She’ll be about. Must be. Hiding up somewhere.”

Galantry turned his head. “Did you go to the Home Farm?”

“Yes, sir. There’s not a building within three miles I haven’t looked into. She ain’t there. She’s about somewhere here. Won’t come out.”

Galantry assented without speaking. There was a curious sympathy between them, not so much the bond between man and man as between expert and expert in the ways of the wild.

All round them the garden was packed with small movements and Lilliputian sound as the gods must hear cities. The unclothed tree tops, curled into new symmetry by the springing buds, swayed against a clear lake of sky in which remote stars looked their distance. The black shrubs crouched and rustled, ferreting in the earth. It was a night of happenings, growings, urgency, fights for life.

Under the ground the bulbs were forcing their way up against the matted turf. The grass smelled sharp and new, and everywhere there was irrepressible, unconquerable life, struggling and straining to be free. The earth was cold and wet and dangerous, but agonizingly lovely and tremendously at work.

Behind the two men the house was alight with candles. Richard shifted uncomfortably.

“If you was to talk to her, sir,” he began, “like enough she’d come out. I’ll take t’others into the house.”

It was suggested with great natural delicacy, and when the doors were shut old Galantry walked up and down and round about the

garden, talking and pleading with his wife, who was hidden somewhere in the dark. He scolded her, coaxed her, and even begged her, but there was no reply, no heavier movement, and after a long time he went into the library, stoked up the fire until it blazed, and sat in there with the curtains pulled back, the warm inviting glow shining out over the short grass.

There was nothing sentimental in the gesture. On the contrary, he made the arrangement with broken-hearted embarrassment, for he would have done the same thing to entice home a sulky or wounded dog. He was tired, and as he leaned back in his chair he felt old and a fool. The consequences of his folly were bouncing all over him, like apples from an overturned barrel. The other side of his distress, the fear, the aching misery, which was not his by right, but appeared to belong to a younger Galantry cheated out of it by circumstance so long before, still startled him.

He sat there waiting until the dawn.

Jason found Shulie at three in the morning. It was still dark and very sharp weather. He and old Larch were walking back to the farm kitchen after a night of successful labour in the barn, and their minds were full of the difficulties of birth. Jason was still young at that time, but he had already begun to get the shiny, corded appearance, which stamped 'horse' all over him when he got older. Larch was old already; a placid, gentle old man. Nothing worried or surprised him, and his voice was as soothing as his enormous seamy hands.

Jason, who had little respect for anything on two legs and something like veneration for anything on four, loved him on occasions like this, and was always nervous in case the old man died or got seized up with the rheumatics. He was thinking of heating the old chap with something that would warm the blood of a jack fish, when they heard a sound almost at their feet.

Jason was carrying the lantern, and he raised it. He saw the situation immediately.

Back in the summer the top of a badly-stacked waggon load of hay had floundered off into an old dry ditch just outside the farm gate. At the time it had been protected casually with a faggot or two from a nearby pile, and Jason had been meaning to have the whole thing cleared, but had never got round to sparing the labour. Now a dark hole marked the mouth of a little cave in it, and out of

the hole hung a corner of green satin petticoat.

Both men had heard the story, of course.

Richard's visit to the Home Farm, although discreet, had not really deceived anybody. Besides the whole countryside was waiting for the gypsy to run away, and had been so waiting for a twelvemonth.

Jason whistled through his teeth. "We'd better go up to the Hall," he said softly. But before Larch nodded the sound which had first arrested them came again, and the old man took the lantern.

"Reckon there's summat to do," he observed briefly. "Let me get down, master, will 'ee? Let me get down in 'ere."

So Larch delivered the last son old Galantry ever had, and his household felt it was disgraced and humiliated.

As he stood on the far side of the cart track in the darkness, Jason smelled the sweet hay and the clean morning air, which no red curtains had polluted, and he heard the old horseman talking as he had heard him a hundred times before, soothing, caressing, and so quiet that his voice might have been a stream mumbling. It was meaningless sound most of the time, sometimes sharp and almost brutally commanding, and then soft again, gentle and persuasive.

"Now, now. Now, now. Har! There, there. Now, now. Yes, yes. Yes. A good little old gel. A good little old gel. Soon, soon. Now, now."

The sky was lightening, the birds had started to whistle, and Jason was chilled to the bone. The yellow lantern glow shining through the dry grasses, and the spiky silhouette of the faggots, now obscuring, now revealing outlines and colours within, reminded him of something which he felt uncomfortably was Popery.

There was no need to ask if the woman was alive, for he could hear her heavy breathing. She was a good 'un in one respect, anyway, he thought, for there was not a sound out of her now that she knew that she was not alone.

Now the crisis was rising again. He could hear the quiet voice of Larch, the rustling, the single sound from the woman, the agonized, heroic breathing....

The shocking impropriety of the whole affair burst on Jason suddenly; colour flooded his face, and the country boy still in him swept aside the purely veterinary considerations which until now had preoccupied him.

"I'll goo down to the house and get my missus," he said aloud over his shoulder, and set off at a trot. But before he had got a couple of yards, a new sound altogether cut through the morning.

It was the great, first cry; always familiar, yet always terrible. It rang out challengingly over the busy growing world. Loud and triumphant and furious. An angry bellow from the ever-returning conqueror of the earth come back again to battle for his inheritance. Another reinforcement from the inexhaustible reserve.

Jason waited, and Larch's voice, delighted as it always was at such times, answered the question that had been in his mind.

"A little old boy!" he was shouting amid the roaring, "a little old boy! Come up my dearie, come up my lady, come up my smart, pretty girl. A great, shouting little old boy; fine and fierce as a little old bull. Holler, my little old 'un; holler, will 'ee. Do 'ee good, and won't hurt I!"

At noon when Galantry was asleep in his chair with his jaw dropped like a dead man's, and Shulie and the baby were sleeping too, with the hated curtains torn down round the naked bed, the sun was up and the doors were open and the regular, sensible ritual of an ordered, civilized day was in full swing once more.

Pale after the night's insufferable affront, Dorothy met Richard in the hall.

"Not a sign of fever. Not a scratch on the boy, and not a sneeze in either of them," she said, continuing aloud the indignant harangue which had been going on in her mind for the best part of six hours. "But God knows what sort of a man he'll be after a start like that."

"That's his look-out," said Richard, adding with the finality and brutality of his kind, age and country: "He can't never be a gentleman. That's one thing certain sure."



## *Chapter Four*

They christened him James; partly because it seemed a good manly name, but also because as far as Galantry knew, no one in the family had ever borne it, and so no one could possibly be offended.

James never altered it, even when he altered his surname, and he never allowed anyone to call him Jimmy. But nevertheless, for the whole of his life he privately considered it a low, inferior sort of name, just as the name William was always surrounded in his mind with a quite unreasonable halo of importance and superiority.

It was typical of him that he never did get away from this idiotic piece of mental rubbish, and it never occurred to him to do anything about it save to accept it as a natural evil. That was the Shulie in him. It used to make him laugh though sometimes, and that was old Will Galantry in him. On the whole these two settled down very peaceably in the boy, though that belongs to later in the story.

Until he was seven years and nine months old, the young James firmly believed he had inherited the earth. There was little to prevent him getting this idea. There were few visitors to the house in those years, and when one did come, Dorothy always bundled James out of the way; first because he was so dark, and secondly because she loved him so.

This passion of hers developed in his babyhood, much to her own embarrassment, and to all the country folks' good-humoured amusement for she was considered to be "wonderfully proud," and the kind of woman who would not have had children of her own, anyway. Very soon she gave up pretending, and they gave up laughing, and James first belonged to her and afterwards when he could talk and walk, she to him.

It was Shulie's fault. Shulie was as good a mother as is any other nice, healthy animal. Once her baby was weaned, it became to her just another member of the family, not specially her own. Since she had no sentimentalities or conventions in the matter, she behaved naturally and returned her undivided affection to Galantry, although by him she had no more children.

When Galantry married her, he knew only that she would not

dare to leave him because if she did her own people would not take her back. He never did realize that to her, the marriage tie went far deeper than that.

Sometimes in the early years, when he saw her from his window standing in the air, her arms outstretched, enjoying the rough, sensuous caress of the wind, he would be overtaken by a sudden terror, and feared that he might become hag-ridden by his conscience urging him to let her go free. This was a fantastic idea as he knew perfectly well, for she was his wife and the mother of his child, but he was a man who played with his thoughts and got much of his entertainment from them. Yet whenever in that nagging self torture, which is the vice of the introspective, he used to edge up to the subject, he was always first gladdened, and then humbled, and to be honest, made to be rather puzzled to find her clinging to his dry, chilly body in a dumb agony of youth and warmth.

Old Galantry never did quite understand this, and he used to wonder if she was obstinately making the best of her destiny. The notion that she loved him because he was her husband, and that a cunning, if primitive mixture of training and breeding had made that fact well-nigh magical to her, never came into his mind. He saw that she was grateful for his tenderness, and he thought that very sweet in her, but he never knew how passionately grateful she was, or dreamed that she would still have loved and waited on him had he treated her like a dog. In the end he gave up fidgeting about it, and took what the gods had given him, but to his dying day he kept her away from younger men.

So James grew up on his own, with Dorothy as his protector, keeper and slave. He was an odd-looking child from the beginning. He was wedge-shaped and not very tall, and he had the barrel chest of some ancestor of Shulie's; some past smith, swinging his hammer in the greenwood, had laid the foundations of that torso. It sat oddly on the fine, aristocratic legs Galantry had had from his mother, and of which she had been so proud. These did not please James so well. All his life he had a complex about legs, insisting that they should be stout and not too long; and this in general, and not only for himself, which would have been reasonable. His hands were Galantry's too; so like, that they were almost replicas. They were small, artistic, and extraordinarily sensitive at the finger tips. His head resembled neither parent's particularly; it was square, and set very firmly on the short, thick neck of a Smith. He was dark,

too, darker even than his mother, and he had her hair, which curled snakily to his poll; while the down on his body, over his cheek bones, and on his forearms, and even between his shoulder blades, was blue dark, even in infancy. The top part of his face was like his father's, and they had the same heavy-lidded eyes, which should have been mournful, but which were always amused. Galantry had noticed those eyes in all his children, and his own father had had them, as had one of his grandparents also. They interested him, but what the joke had been which had brought that amusement into eyes which generations of experience had made sad, he could not imagine.

James had a coarse, characterful mouth, not unlike Shulie's, but without quite her innocence. In later life it became hard, but when he was a child it was loose and, as the country people said, lustful. A rum-looking little boy, strong as a lion.

He governed Dorothy from an early age. Had he been her own son she would never have put up with it, but she was a great one for knowing her place, and she taught him to know it too. His parents were kind to him, but they were remote, always absorbed in themselves, and their indifference kept him if not humble, at least reasonable, so that he grew up to be self-reliant, convinced of his third place in the order of superiority, but schooled by the tidy, strictly common-sense discipline of Dorothy's background.

Dorothy made him physically clean and mentally honest, and taught him that God would get at him and persecute him if he was not. Since he had Shulie's simplicity and credulousness, he believed her literally and was very careful. One thing she taught him by mistake, though, and it was unfortunate because it was not true. Dorothy convinced James that there was a lower order of mortals who adored him, and who existed to serve him because he was somehow special. Not a soul breathed a word, even hinting at the scandal (and it was still a real scandal and all over the county) in his hearing. Dorothy saw to that herself, and not only for the child's sake. Her particular world depended on old Galantry's credit as an important, trustworthy gentleman being kept good. However, nothing Dorothy could do could disguise Shulie; even at the age of six James began to notice that there was something very unusual about her. Dorothy taught him one set of rigid rules on which, so he came to understand, both his safety and his interesting quality of specialness depended; Shulie broke all these flagrantly, and yet he

saw she remained unchastened by God, and was still apparently the second most important person in the house. For a long time James could get no sense out of Dorothy on this subject, and while it did not bother him particularly, it went down in his mind as a mystery.

One day, however, she said something which gave him an idea that she might not always tell him all she knew. He found that terrifying, and it offended him also, for he thought it impudent in her. No one ever realized where James got his pride, for it was not a peculiarity of the Galantry's; yet goodness knows the answer was there plain enough. James got his pride from Dorothy. She fed it to him with his pap, and her love for him, which like any other love, was a creative force, etched it on his character indelibly. So it was not really extraordinary after all; few diseases are necessarily hereditary.

The first clue Dorothy gave him about Shulie was the interesting thing she said about spitting in the house.

"No," she thundered, "no, no, no! You mayn't never do it, even if your Ma do. Do your Papa spit? Do I spit?"

Her final phrase put James on to the truth, since it removed the possibility that spitting might be one of those things permissible in privileged women alone. Dorothy would not amplify her statement, and he caught the idea then for the first time that there was something radically wrong with Shulie.

There were several peculiar circumstances attending this otherwise trivial incident. In the first place, on receiving the idea, the young James was seized with a premonition. It was one of the first of a long line of them, stretching not only throughout his own lifetime, but persisting to the third and fourth generation.

These impressions of the future, and all the other sensitivenesses which were kin with them, were the cause of so much pride, so much superstition, muddle and fuss generally, on so many different occasions, that perhaps it would be better to spend a little time on the one manifest on this occasion which was a perfect and simple example.

James merely felt that he suddenly knew something with his head which all the rest of him had known for a very long time. That thing was that there was something dangerous to his comfort and unlucky and inescapable for him in Shulie. It was no vague impression. It clamped down upon him; a sensation of disaster so

strange and inexplicable that he began to cry out at the top of his voice that he was frightened. He bellowed with fear, growing crimson in the face as if he were choking. Dorothy caught him in her arms. She hated any suggestion that James was "different," especially in a psychic or magical fashion. That stressed the gypsy element far too much. Already there were a great many tales about Shulie in this respect; these had been bound to arise for the whole countryside was steeped in superstition concerning the gypsies. The truth, at any rate as far as Shulie was concerned, lay in two facts.

The first was that the actual physical life in her was so powerful that she could pass on a little of it when emotion freed it. No one called it animal magnetism at that time.

The second was simply that certain of her senses were animal sharp, and she was apt to feel a message from any of these so acutely that she was absorbed by it, and had no time to analyse the sensation.

There were times, therefore, when she appeared prophetic, inasmuch as she behaved like the animal who pulls up and refuses to move just before the bridge breaks, or the tree crashes across the path. It was magic of a kind all right, but no more of the devil than many other secrets of the earth. However, at the time there were several mysteries.

When old Squire Green, Galantry's neighbour, who had been away at Wells recuperating from his excesses, came over to see his old friend's new folly, Galantry thought he looked very much better, but Shulie saw grey under his tan, and smelt a very faint and terrifying odour; and she was so overwhelmed by the recollection which it conjured up, of the ritual of a burning pyre of a caravan far back in her childhood, that she flew into a panic, grew pale herself, and began to cry. She would say nothing to Galantry afterwards except that she "smelled death." This was the literal truth, but as a remark it exasperated him, and when old Philip took ill some days after, and died in a week or so in circumstances Doctor Wild did not altogether understand, since cancer of the upper bowel was not in his experience, there was quite a lot of talk about "Galantry's witch," and the old man himself looked at her curiously.

There were other incidents, too. She could often smell out things which had been mislaid, and could tell if a stranger had recently been in the house. She could never give any satisfactory explanation of her powers, and on the occasion on which she suddenly took an

aversion to the parlour hearth, and insisted on Galantry leaving it, the great fall of burning soot which smothered half the room some hours later, surprised her as much as it did anybody else. But whereas after it had happened, she merely felt happy and relieved, they were upset and mystified, and knew not whether to blame her for making it happen, or for not warning them that it was about to do so.

All this sort of thing made for a great deal of mystery and uncertainty, and Dorothy disliked it because she felt it was "gypsy," and she watched James most anxiously for any sign of the streak. She did her best with him; she cut his hair as short as she dared to try to get the curl out, washed him nightly in lemon water in a pathetic attempt to whiten his skin, raved at him unreasonably for the least untidiness, and even taught him to feel that his pleasure in the open air was not quite what was expected of him.

On this occasion she recognized his outburst of weeping as a premonition of the legacy of trouble his mother had bequeathed to him, and was furious and frightened. Her unreasonable behaviour frightened James still more and he fled howling; not only from the house but from the garden also, and out over the fields.

He forgot his troubles in the bright weather. It was early June and the earth was tricked out in lace and coloured ribbons over her green gown. Her breasts were warm and damp, and her breath scented and voluptuous. James began to cavort in the meadow behind Jason's house; he threw his arms up over his head, and snorted and stamped and heaved his top-heavy little body like a bull. Presently he rolled among the clover and the coltsfoot, and rubbed his forehead in the grass.

"I am happy," he shouted in the earth's soft neck. "I am happy. Happy. Happy."

He strained his lungs to their utmost, and he felt it was like drinking a great pail of beautiful water, the soft kind, which came from the well at the basketmaker's; not the thinner, harder sort they pumped in the kitchen at home. After a bit he scrambled up and began to walk sedately. A notion had come to him that his happiness was not quite a right thing; it was not a clear thought, but something to do with Dorothy, and his being the third most important person in the world. In this new and dignified mood he decided to go on to the stables. He had been round them several times with his father, and had been charmed by the animals. Also

he had been made to feel proud and secure by the atmosphere of deference which had surrounded the two of them as they had walked among the smiling hat-touching fraternity gathered there. James had liked that, and now he had a mind to sample it again.

He had to get through the hedge to reach the track, and because he could not straddle the ditch on the other side, he dropped into it, and walked along it for a bit, watching the clear water play round the soles of his sturdy, buckled shoes.

When he reached the place where the bank was lowest, he came out and his dark head rose up from among the cow parsley like a foal. Jason himself was on the track talking to Larch. The old man was very shaky in these days, but he could still get about and give advice. Both men turned as the little boy appeared so suddenly, and then seeing he was alone, they began to laugh together. It was shrill, east coast laughter; not altogether kind and very informed. James felt uncomfortable, and for a moment he stood looking at them. Then he went forward steadily. Their faces did not harden as he approached; rather, he thought, there was a sort of knowing welcome in their eyes as though they had been expecting him for a long time. But they did not touch their hats, and the third most important person in the world noticed the omission at once.

## *Chapter Five*

All the men working for Jason bore the names of common English trees, except one, and he was called Eucalyptus. This apparently incredible circumstance had a reasonable explanation. Jason's grandfather had not been able to read, so the Galantry of the period who had wished to make him his overseer had invented a system whereby the man could keep a record of the labour done by each worker on the estate in spite of the disability; and the system entailed, among other things, the re-naming of all concerned.

As a method of book-keeping it was wildly complicated, and much mental effort would have been spared the Jason family had they scrapped it and attempted straight scholarship. But this they preferred not to do, seeing, since they were free men, no reason why they should be reasonable. So when Jason "did his books" he took seven small flower pots for the seven days of the week and set them in order on a shelf. Every week into each pot he put as many bits of stick as he had men employed. He used a different wood for each man, and cut each twig square so that it had four level sides. For one whole day's work he cut a corner notch in the wood; for a quarter day's work he slashed one side; for half a day's, two sides; for three-quarter's, three sides; and for a full day and a quarter's overtime, he cut only one side and a notch as well. At the end of the week he counted all the notches and slashes and paid out by the reckoning. Since the arrangement was apt to become confusing and had led in the past to many arguments, each man on entering Jason's service was re-christened by the name of the wood of his tally stick as soon as he was hired, and was never called by any other name. As time went on all the commoner trees had their man, and so when the latest lad came to work at the stables, Jason begged a branch of the foreign tree from the Hall glasshouse, and called his new hand Eucalyptus.

When the young James went down to the stables that day, these were the people who eyed him. They were not stupid people, not serfs, but shrewd, practical folk of great determination.

After a brief greeting which was friendly, but not respectful, Jason and Larch walked slowly into the stable yard talking together, and James followed them, realizing he was forgotten. At first he



was half a mind to go off in a rage and stamp in the field again, but a certain dogged control asserted itself in him. Galantry would just have recognized it, but it was not strong in him.

James dropped into step behind the two men. He was biding his time. As the third most important person in the world he intended to assert his position as soon as a convenient opportunity should appear. He felt very strong physically, his shoulders and chest felt strong; all his life he kept that awareness of the strength of his body. Other people he found out afterwards were seldom conscious of their bodies at all, unless there was something wrong with them. He was not like this, he knew the whole time. His strength made him laugh sometimes; a little snort of secret pleasure. Even when he grew old he used to snort in the same way at the same thing; but by that time, naturally, his mind was so full that it had no leisure to remark what it was that pleased him.

Just now, of course, he was at his green best. Adolescence was still far away, and he was fighting fit to tackle the elementary. His senses were beautifully clean and sharp, his emotional nature fearless; and his nice, simple brain new and sweet running. He felt a little god, not proud, just god-like.

The yard they entered seemed so long that it made him think of the High Street in the town he had once visited, and he was gratified to think he had a third share in owning it. There was a square archway under a loft at the far end, and there the cobbles rose to make a little hill, so that he could only see a strip of green beyond. It looked like a very dull picture in a wooden frame.

The air reeked of horses; a smell so very strong to his super-sensitive nose that it made his eyes water. But he found it exciting as well as unpleasant. There were horse sounds about, too; these were lumberings, the vicious noise of iron on stone, and vasty breathings and sighings, all horribly lovely. This nice nasty element which was new to his direct mind puzzled him a little. He hoped there was nothing wicked in it, and his next thought was that even so, it was worth it.

At first he thought the place was deserted by people, but presently he heard voices coming through the archway. These were followed by a terrible sound. He had heard a stallion trumpeting before; no one living near Jason's yard could have avoided it, but this time it was much nearer and the triumph in it was uppermost. God Almighty, what a sound! His face and head tingled in a sudden

network of pain as his nerves jangled, and he squealed aloud.

Larch turned round very slowly, as old men must.

"Frightened?" he enquired.

"No," gasped James, and squealed again.

Larch began to laugh. "You like it, don't ye," he asked roughly, "don't ye? Blood's coming out. That will. Nothing won't never stop it. He likes horses, don't ye, boy, don't ye? You little old smith. You little old traveller."

The epithets were incomprehensible to James, but he realized they were not exactly unkind, and yet not complimentary. At any rate, they were insultingly familiar coming from this old person.

Jason saw the child's expression and let his eyes wander.

"Best be quiet along of that together," he said briefly.

"No. No. I'm old," said Larch, a triumphant quack breaking his voice. "I'm old. No need for me to be quiet. I've always got me grave to goo to now. By the time you could harm me, little 'un, I'll be in it, see. He likes the old entire, don't 'ee, boy? I'll tell yon somewhat; so do I. I love 'un. Give me your hand, you little old smith. You stand here with I. Now you watch. Loveliest sight in all the world. Loveliest sight between here and Chelmsford town."

James submitted to having his hand held. He found he could feel the excitement better that way. He felt more secure; less likely to be burst in pieces by the delicious goings on in his chest and stomach.

"Where?" he demanded anxiously.

"There," said Larch, his eyes fixed on the opening under the loft. "Now!"

James looked, and had one of the great experiences of his life. He saw no ordinary sight; it is not easy to explain this, because all that actually came through the archway was a sunburned, red-haired man, hanging on to the mouth of an excitable red horse, in an attempt to check its reckless clattering down the slippery incline.

James saw animal strength in its most idealized and uplifted form. The lovely lines of bones and sinew of both man and horse rose up in a flurry of sparks, and seemed all cased in red gold, like fire blazing. It was a picture of pride and blood and natural pageantry. James was transported. In one moment he felt filled, satisfied, slaked. Immediately afterwards he was alarmed. Something alive appeared to have been born in him. Something expected to come out. He struggled for expression, and then as the

realization that he had none, had no way of releasing the idea, which by passing through him could emerge a new, created thing, he began to cry.

Old Larch's grip tightened. He was a little rheumy himself, and Jason, who caught sight of the two of them, began to laugh in a high pitched, spiteful fashion. The spell was broken, but the ache remained in James. It was an ache of which he never did get quite rid in all the rest of his life, and from time to time during the years it was added to by other experiences.

The little gift of expression which Galantry had given him was more than outweighed by the dumbness which was Shulie's legacy, so he was never able to set free the pieces of created art which were conceived on those occasions. He never could tell anyone else in the world, ever, by any means at all, what exactly it was he had seen in the picture the archway framed. Yet they did not die in vain, for the blessed phoenix of desire rose out of them, and the desire to express was one of the things that James made in his life, and he passed it on, not only to his children, but to all sorts of other people whom he inspired.

At the moment, however, James was far too occupied with the next thing to worry about the mysteries and complications contained in the adventure of being alive. The red-haired man brought the horse dancing down the yard, and a small crowd of men and boys followed them admiringly.

"A rare 'un," said Larch reverently. "Beautiful, ain't he?"

James did not know anything about the points of a horse, or even that an animal had any, but in the ten minutes which followed, he began to get a very vivid idea of what Larch and Jason meant by a "blood."

The stallion's name was Mandrake, and in the background somewhere Mandrake had an ancestor called Poteightos. As far as James could gather, Poteightos was a heavenly steed, a sort of Jehovah horse, a Zeus. More than this, however, he in turn had had a sire whose name was so impressive that Larch could scarcely trust himself to mention it. "Eclipse." James never heard the word afterwards without experiencing a faint, superstitious thrill.

James was not a fanciful little boy by nature, but he was not deeply informed, and it did not seem to him unreasonable that horses should be a race co-equal with men, the bloods being as it

were a divine, or at least angelic, strain among them. He felt he was fairly familiar with angels since Dorothy had assured him that there was always one in the wall just above the head of his bed. He had heard it scratching sometimes.

The whole thing was highly peculiar, of course, but seven years of life had convinced him that there was nothing to wonder at in that. Life was peculiar. The more you heard about it the more staggering it became. He saw clearly though, that Larch must be a sort of Dorothy of the horse world, and would know what he was talking about, so he listened with deep attention.

The hall-mark, the sign of Eclipse, Larch said, lowering his voice on the mighty name, was the dark spots on the chestnut rump of a horse. Always in the direct male line there were these dark spots in the fiery hide, just there, on the quarters.

James found the male line so mysterious that Larch had to explain it. "On the sire side," he said, "come down through the father, see? Now the dam side, or as you might say, the mother's, that doesn't never carry it."

"Mothers are not so good?" enquired James with interest, pouching another piece of information.

"Mothers are wonderful tricky," affirmed Larch, with dark reminiscence. "Seems they can spoil a good 'un, but they can't never make one. A good dam will always throw to the sire, whatever he be, right or wrong, but a poor little old dam may do anything. She's a right dangerous thing. No mistake about it. Son may be all right, grandson likewise, and then trouble starts in a whole line on 'em."

James was not much clearer after all this, but he did not forget the maxim. It remained in his memory for years, and he regarded it as gospel long after he had forgotten where he had learned it.

The notion of the Sign interested him immensely. He looked at the dark, irregular patches on the stallion's soft gold skin, which were like oil stains on satin, and a thrill ran through him; for glory of glories, had not he himself a great black mole on his own seat? At one time it had alarmed him slightly, but Dorothy had said it was quite common, and nothing to fidget about.

So hitherto he had accepted it without interest, but now he was indignant with her. Nothing to worry about indeed! That was just like Dorothy; always hiding important things in case they might

make him conceited. He, James, had the Sign, too. True, he was not a horse, but might not this mark of superiority be universal? Belong to men as well as horses?

He was so delighted, so pleased, and so eager to see the admiration of the gathering transferred from the stallion to himself, that all other considerations went out of his head, and with a single-mindedness which was pure Shulie, he pulled open his breeches, scruffed up his shirt, and nudging Larch displayed his buttock proudly to him, pointing out the big mole which was nearly the size of a shilling, and black as a coal.

The shout of laughter went up all round in one great brutal roar, the clap of it burst over his head like a storm. Realization poured over him, chilling him, almost taking his breath away, and after its cold came the great heat of shame.

"Taking down your breeches before folk!" Had Dorothy appeared like an outraged goddess, he could not have heard and seen her more vividly.

Death, eternal nothingness, he thought, would have been merciful in that instant of exquisite chagrin. The old Will Galantry in him was appalled. His instincts rebelled with a horror out of all proportion to the enormity of the crime he had committed against his own dignity. All through his life he suffered from the same sort of experiences, and gradually came to recognize his tendency to do for innocent reasons naïve things which shocked his own instincts. Fortunately for him on this occasion the laughter started the stallion, who let fly with his heels and began to plunge like a lunatic, taking the amusement off the faces behind him. But even so Jason had to hold on to a door post to keep himself upright, while Larch had to sit down on a mounting block, he was so overcome. They were still sniggering and James was still burning when they paused outside a loose box halfway down the yard.

Jason was all for getting on and taking a look at "the mare" they kept talking about, but old Larch was quietly obstinate about the knee of a bay, which had suddenly cropped up in the conversation.

James trailed after them wretchedly, and when they opened the half-door and stood on the threshold, peering into the warm, dusky interior, he followed.

A coach horse leader, a very big Cleveland, was fidgeting in the straw, and Larch went forward discreetly to squat down in

successive positions of vantage round it's puffy foreleg. He surveyed it from all angles, but he did not touch it, and presently he came back to Jason shaking his head. While they were talking, James went in unnoticed.

The salty warmth of the animal came up to meet him comfortingly. It smelt right and friendly to James, and as he bent over the enormous, iron-tipped leg, and prodded the short hairs over the joint, he felt a large muzzle blowing and lipping over his shoulder blades. He put up his hand to caress it, gratefully. Here, anyway, was one member of the co-equal race who was prepared to acknowledge his superiority on sight.

The horse took his hand in its mouth, but deciding magnanimously not to bite it off at the wrist, thrust it out again with a powerful tongue. James went on prodding the knee. He was looking for the thorn he expected to find in the swelling, for when he had one himself, that was usually the cause. Finally he found it, and brought his other hand down to help squeeze it out. At the first pinch the brute snorted and reared away from him, a hoof passing within an inch of his eye. James was irritated. "Stop it," he said angrily. "Stop it, I've just found it. Stand still, please!"

It is an odd thing that most domestic animals seem to catch the meaning of remarks if the speaker for some reason or other honestly expects them to, and on this occasion the Cleveland clearly caught the drift of James's statement, for he dropped his feet quietly and stood shivering. The small boy worked hard, but the pin-point of wood did not move. Presently he spoke over his shoulder to Larch.

"I can see it, but I can't get it out," he said.

The old man did not reply immediately, and when he did his voice was far more soothing than usual. "That's a bush, is it?" he enquired. "I didn't think of that. He ain't been out to pick up anything."

"It's a sliver," said James after another inspection. "Very likely it's off the wall."

He went round the box looking carefully at the tarred boards which lined it, and did not notice anything unusual in the lack of comment from the doorway. He had to move the bay's tail to get by at one point. It was lashing, and he protested bitterly to the animal as he brushed it out of his face. He never found the new, white scar on the tar, for as he passed the half-door, a steely hand came over it

and drew him out into the sunlight. Jason set him on his feet, and James saw in amazement that he had become sallow, and his thin face looked discoloured and faded round the eyes. The epithets which burst from him were new to the child, but the insult in them was unmistakable. He was astounded and offended, and Larch intervened hastily.

“You don’t want to go up to a beast you don’t know till you know more,” he said mildly. “That’s an ugly tempered little old brute. He uses his front feet like a man fighting. We’d look wonderfully funny if he’d killed of ye, shu’nt we?”

James glanced behind him, his nose on a level with the top of the half-door. The horse was watching him with an eye which was like a big, blue alley marble. There was no animosity there, rather a sort of silly, affable dependency. James could not raise any fear of him.

“Well, he’s got a sliver in his knee,” he said, with dignity. “I’ll get it out if you’re frightened.” He was quite conscious of his condescension, and aware, too, that he was asserting the authority which had been given him by his private understanding with the animal. He glanced from one to the other, and was comforted to see the impression he was making.

It was true that Larch refused his help, but he did so with sincere respect. He said he would poultice the sliver out later, and would tie up the joint in a cabbage leaf afterwards to cool it. But he made the explanation as if to a colleague. So when they went on towards the mare, James walked abreast of the others. It was only his extreme niceness which prevented him from walking in front of them. Things were going to be all right after all. His momentary lapse had been forgiven, if not perhaps so much by man, at least by fate. His new friend, the horse, had put them in their place for laughing.

Meanwhile, Larch and Jason were eyeing each other over his head. “That’s a wonderful, strange thing, so it is,” remarked Jason. “Never seen ’em, never handled ’em, but come to it by Nature.”

“Come to it by Nature,” echoed Larch. “By the blood in his little old mother’s body. Reckon I’ll have to take you down to the forge, boy, and see if you can shoe.”

The thought appeared to tickle him, and he thumped James familiarly between the shoulder blades. “You got some strength there,” he added, with interest. “Extraordinary strength for a little

old boy. Feel of him, master.” Jason felt James’s back as if he had been a little animal.

“Eh,” he said approvingly, “wonderful strong. He’s a Smith all right. We’ll have to run and take the washing off the line when you come by, young ’un.”

This subtle joke bewildered James, but it delighted Larch, who wheezed nearly as much as he had done over the mole. James showed the whites of his eyes, as the crackle of laughter shuttled over his head. Dismay crept over him. Something had gone wrong. He had triumphed over the incident of the coach horse, but not in the right way. He had an uncomfortable impression that there was some fate which was being confirmed about him by whatever he did, and it was not altogether something to be proud of. Like most children he was very much aware of fate.

The mare they went to see was sulking in a shed leading off a barn yard which gave on to the green meadow James had seen through the archway. She was an ugly little thing, and was still smarting and ill-tempered from the hobble and its indignities. Jason said she was a cross-bred cart mare; part Suffolk, and part a Russian “pound-a-legger,” but her virtues were that she was sturdy and soundly healthy, with a lot of work in her.

The two men looked at her briefly, and shut the door again.

James listened to their short sentences, and by guessing during the blanks, came to understand that some sort of experiment was afoot. He made cautious enquiries, and was half flattered, and half affronted to find they were prepared to answer him freely, having assumed, no doubt, that since he had shown an affinity with the beasts he would automatically know a great deal about them, and the peculiar mechanism of reproduction generally. He never forgot how offended he was by this; he was not shocked in the ordinary sense, having had a fairly accurate notion of the principal facts for some time, but he was shaken to the roots of his pride by something strange in their manner. There was a sort of “he’s funny, he doesn’t matter” note in their talk, and he found it very hard to bear, especially as he felt that they might possibly be right.

Suddenly the whole explanation came out baldly; put with all the brutal truthfulness of the East Anglian. Old Larch had no intention of hurting the child; he was simply trying to explain something else, which to his way of thinking was remarkably interesting.



"The foal will be a half-breed. He won't be a Blood, but he'll have Blood in him," he said earnestly. "Nothing'll alter that whatever happens. See? Look now, it's like yourself. You're old Squire Galantry's son all right, anyone can see that, but you've got your mother in you. You're a Smith too; a gyppo; borned in a ditch. Nothing'll alter that, will it? Whatever you do, you can't never prevent the gyppo showing, and maybe a hundred years to-day you'll have a grandchild who's pure gyppo, like as not. Borned with ear-rings, very likely. Nature's a wonderful little old girl; once she's got a hold of a thing, she don't never let that go."

"Har! You don't want to talk like that together," said Jason, driving the nail right home in his clumsiness.

The square little boy in his good clothes stood in the grass with his feet apart, and his weight balanced evenly. He stared at the two unwinking. Slowly the information settled into him; it got down into his mind; it answered questions; cleared up mysteries; filled in gaps. It fitted so neatly, went in so smoothly, that he knew it for the truth at once. Curiously, its immediate effect was calming. The sensation of approaching catastrophe and revelation which had hung over him for a long time now, and which had worked up to a crisis all the day, ceased abruptly. Here it was. Shulie was a gyppo.

He himself was not the third most important person in the world by thousands. He was half a gyppo. James knew a great deal about gypsies, and he shared the common country view of them. He had seen them, too, and had heard their mendicant whimperings. To him they were the lowest known human race, and he felt Larch and Jason entirely justified in despising them.

His great strength, which was not only physical, asserted itself. He felt rather cold, but very quiet and self-contained, and very much aware that he must defend himself. He was so fresh and new in heart and mind that he was exquisitely sensitive to all that happened to him, and he knew that it was as though a half-perceived, shadowy creature, who had been walking beside him for a long time, had suddenly got into his skin with him. He looked at Jason coldly.

"Will the foal be as strong as his father?" he enquired.

"Very likely stronger," said Jason; "hope so!"

"Will he look like him?"

"Might do."

"He'll have his father in him," put in Larch, who was still anxious to make it all quite clear. "But he won't be quite like him; not with that little old mare for a dam. Come what may, he'll be a bit carty about the head and neck." And for the life of him he could not help his wet, red-rimmed eyes from shooting a glance over James's shoulders.

"More'n likely he'll be defferent from both of 'em," said Jason, hurrying the whole subject out of the way. "That's a toss up every time."

Larch laughed. "That's so. He'll rise to the highest or sink to the lowest. That's what an old woman told me at Lavenham Fair. Old gypso woman, she was. That's about the size of it. He'll be a mystery packet."

"I see," said James, with Galantry dignity. "But he won't ever be a real Blood."

"No, no, boy. He won't never be a Blood."

"Not if he wants to?"

"Not if he tears the heart out on him. Course not. He'll be a half-bred born, won't he?"

"Perhaps he'll be better," said James in revolt.

"I hope he will for the job I want him to do," said Jason. "That's why I'm a-breeding of him."

James went home by the long way round. He was older than before, he felt, and far more independent. He took a mind to walk round to the hollow behind Lower Wood, where he was not supposed to go. The gypsies were gone from the place, although they had been there recently. The grass was still worn from their wheels, and scarred from their fires. James went carefully round the place and then stalked home through the fields.

He had no desire to stamp and cavort now, but walked rather sedately, imitating Galantry's small steps.

When he got to the house, he ran up the stairs and went into Shulie's room. It smelled unaired in the hot sunshine, which poured through the closed casement, and was in its customary pickle. James eyed it with new knowledge, and was rather frightened of it. He picked his way to the long mirror and stood looking at himself with a conscious courage which gave him a secret, slightly vicious satisfaction. At first he hoped that the obvious thickness of his neck and chest were something to do with his coat, and when Dorothy

found him he was stripped to the waist, his thick bones showing clearly through his soft skin.

He silenced her scandalized outburst at this evidence of vanity by his first remark.

“I see I’m a bit carty about the head and neck,” he said. “Oh, and Dorothy, you should have told me I was born in a ditch.”

## *Chapter Six*

Some people cannot be bothered with regret. Dorothy was one of these. She had no time for it, she said, and meant that it was too bitter to be borne.

As soon as she realized that James knew the things which she had been keeping as a secret, she accepted the fact, and went on from there, counting only the advantages of his discovery. Chief among these was the realization that she had no longer any need to watch what she was saying, and at once she raised the startled little boy to the status of an ally, and made him a party to all her hopes and fears for him.

As they worked together in the herb garden, or as he followed her about upstairs, among the linen presses, or as she sat on his bed at night, she now had so much to tell him about the whole affair that if there had ever been any hope that the brutality of Larch's revelation would not take too much effect on the child, it was dashed for ever. James heard the whole story over and over again, and a great deal more besides.

The oddness, the roughness, the general moral unreliability of gypsies, as well as their pariah qualities, were discussed by the two of them at tremendous length; and he heard much that was true and much that was fantasy and country superstition.

Had he not had so much of Shulie in him, he might have been seriously affected; but he was too healthy for that. For a time it is true, he saw himself as the child with the hump or the club foot must see himself; but fortunately for him, Dorothy was very sensible. Her only wild ideas came from her ignorance of certain facts. Psychologically she was sound as a bell. She stood for no fancy nonsense, and she loved James and her one idea was to do him good. In her programme for him there was no escape by sublimation, no silly turning a disadvantage into an asset, nor yet magnifying it into a life tragedy. She just made him understand he had a special danger. By the time she had a quarter done talking to him, he was still able to consider himself an important addition to the human race, but one who had perhaps, a somewhat uncertain hold on that position. It made him a very good, very serious, very

watchful little boy. All this was Dorothy's doing, and in that she lived on in James until he died.

The destructive part of her work on James lay, of course, in the things she told him which were not true. It was only because they were lies that her wild ideas about Shulie's people did such bad work. They were false; they put him out.

James grew to hate and fear Shulie, so that he lost much of her, and disliked that which he was forced to keep. Had she ever been a mother to him, so that he loved her, the complications might have been serious; but as it was, he was spared that ordeal by confusion. The older James grew the less he liked Shulie. She embarrassed him a hundred times a day. Coarsenesses which tickled old Galantry, who had no trace of them in himself, frightened James, who saw in them reminders of his own impulses. He avoided her as much as possible, and in secret imitated his father and the Vicar, who gave him his first lessons.

It was over this question of education that James met his first fence. Old Galantry had been to Westminster School, then the first in the land, and had sent all his sons there. But when James's turn arrived, a hitch occurred. Dorothy had been waiting for something like it. She found out all the details, passed them through the mill of her indignation, and let James have the result. The trouble was that about the time when James should have gone to the school, Galantry's first grandchild, eldest son of Young Will and his wife, was due to go there also; and Young Will's father-in-law sent him down to see Galantry with urgent representations that the uncle and nephew should not be allowed to be educated together. It was a narrow, unkindly move, infuriating to old Galantry and not pleasant for either of his sons, but it marked a change, a new era. The casual days of the eighteenth century had gone.

Young Will arrived unexpectedly one hot Saturday afternoon about four o'clock, when James was sitting hidden in the shrubbery, a place of which he was very fond. He saw his half brother get out of the little box carriage, and noticed that both master and servant were in furious tempers. The man went round to the yard and the visitor strode into the house. James only saw his face for a moment, but he saw that he was ashamed-angry. These fine distinctions in emotion were very clear to James, and he never understood that he saw them more easily than do most people. On this occasion he was alarmed, for ashamed-anger he well knew was the most

unreasonable, erratic anger of all. He kept out of the way all day, and the next thing he remembered about the incident was himself eating kidneys toasted on a fork for his supper in the breakfast-room, while Richard stood waiting to take him in to see his father and the newcomer, who were dining by themselves.

He remembered afterwards the feeling of obstinate pleasure in the food slowly wearing down his apprehension about the coming interview. As they went through the hall, he looked up and saw Shulie peering over the banisters; curiosity and excitement and nervousness in her face. It was so exactly what he was feeling himself that he was suddenly angry with her as if she had taken something from him instead of him taking it from her. He scowled at her, and she drew back at once, eyeing him sulkily like another child. Even Richard was inquisitive. It was evident that something very unusual was happening, for old Galantry belonged to a period when no gentleman saw anybody, or anything for that matter, just after dinner at night.

James always liked the dining-room because it was cool and opulent, with shining wood and red and gold walls. It had a decent, solid grandeur about it, which always made him feel secure. Tonight it looked more luxuriant than ever, for it was partially in shadow, and the sunset light came in yellow and caressing through the open west windows. Dorothy had set out the best silver, and the air was heavy with flowers and the intimate perfume of Burgundy.

The two men sat facing one another, and the first thing that struck James when he saw them was that they were terrifyingly alike. They were dressed very differently, for Young Will had gone over to the very high breeches and very short waistcoat that Mr. Topham had made so fashionable. But in spite of that, James saw them as almost identical; a man both old and young. The sight was very nearly too much for him; he nearly panicked with rage and jealousy.

Young Will was looking at him with the same speculation which he had sometimes seen in his father's face, and they were still staring at one another when old Galantry barked at James telling him to pay his duty to his half-brother. James had never merited this tone from anyone before, and it occurred to him that he must be on show in some way, since Jason used the same voice to an animal he was selling. So he went forward at once and bowed to the younger man in the way the Vicar had taught him, and enquired

most solicitously how he did.

Because the obeisance was old fashioned it pleased Galantry, and struck Young Will as false; but it was gracefully done, and there was nothing in it to complain about. Young Will rubbed his ear uneasily; a gesture of his father's, which sent another stab of jealousy through James.

"Oh, I know, I know," Young Will said uncomfortably. "He's a good fellow. How d'ye do, James? You've got a mighty pair of shoulders on you, brother. But that's not the point, is it, sir?" he added, turning to his father. "It's the damned silly tale. Be reasonable."

"I resent it," said old Galantry warningly. "I resent it very much, you know."

"Not nearly so much as you'd resent an intimation from the school." The words were only muttered, and Young Will stared moodily into the horn of his wine-glass. He knew his mission was vulgar, and he disliked it intensely.

Old Galantry grew brick coloured. He clapped his hand to the place where his sword would have been had he not long since given up wearing one.

"I hope that's not a threat, sir," he said.

"No, sir. It's not." Young Will looked and sounded wretched, and the phrases of the time when polite talking was as much an art as fencing could not hide his embarrassment.

"I only feel that if you persist in your intention, you'll get snubbed, sir, and the boy's life will be a burden to him, and to any other child closely connected with him. I wonder you care to subject my young half-brother here to the ridicule he'd be bound to encounter. You are out of touch, sir. The whole fashionable universe is changing. The mode to-day is to be most nice, most particular. The story has been out once and will be revived. Forgive me, sir, but you know as well as I do that although by no means disgraceful, thirty years ago it would have got the whole family into one duel after another. To-day I assure you it will involve laughter, insults, and a deal of unhappiness for two children in a very fierce school."

After this eloquent outburst, which appeared to exhaust him, he settled back in his chair and lowered his eyes.

"James is my son," said old Galantry, and the listening James,

who was learning fast and hard, was made very proud and pleased in the midst of his misery by the note of dignity and protection. He looked up hopefully.

“Little Will is *my* son,” said Young Will, cocking an eye at his father. “Ever since they got wind of your intention, his mother and her father have been making my life a scourge. I trust you will forgive me for the suggestion, but I don’t suppose, sir, that James’s mother and—er—grandfather have been exercising the same pressure on you.”

There was a moment of complete silence and James glanced at his father confidently, but suddenly his rock gave way under him. The two men were looking at each other steadily, and the two pairs of hooded, otherwise eyes met and wavered. Presently they both began to laugh.

They gave James a glass of wine and he drank it slowly although he hated it, and was on the verge of choking anyway. Afterwards he went out of the room, crossed the hall, and climbed out of the library window.

It was growing dark in the plantation to the east of the house, and he edged through it to the verge of the field beyond. He lay in the grass and wept, until he was cold. Finally he sat up and looked up over the waves of green which were fast turning grey in the failing light. His sight was phenomenal, and he watched single fronds of feathery goose-grass, and the little hairs upon them all bending gracefully before the light wind. The air was cool and soft and smelled so sweet that his sense seemed to faint before he could savour it all. He sat there motionless, feeling himself soothed, and comforted as actually as though something were stroking his very heart.

It was a strange, lovely, physical experience; as if the sweet earth had hugged him, and held him close and made little noises to take his mind off the whole species and their savagery. Under these caresses his self-confidence gradually returned. From the time he had come out of the house he had been feeling simply, but now he began to think once more, and the first thing he thought was that after all it did not matter; and presently he slid into a mood which became typical of him later. It was great, strong, bull-headed obstinacy. Very well then, he thought. In spite of Shulie, in spite of people, in spite of a certain cartyness, in spite of anything the world had in the box for him, he would go on and grow into himself, and



whatsoever tried to stop him should go down at last before his determination if it took him for ever to do it. He sat hunched up in the long grass, a small square figure, black against the deepening grey, lonely and solid, and master of the situation once again.

## *Chapter Seven*

It is quite possible that the life he would have led in a fashionable Public School in the early nineteenth century would have broken James, but the experience was not for him. He went to Mr. Philby's "Establishment for the Sons of Gentlemen," not in London, but upon the London road, and Little Will, his nephew, went to Westminster, where he was a fairly unmolested, ineffectual little scrub.

At Mr. Philby's school in Kelvedon, much of James's self-esteem was restored. Whatever he might have been elsewhere, in that little community he was a whale. If the story followed him (it was the ditch which took everybody's fancy), it was not such a good story to that homely money-conscious stronghold as was Squire Galantry of Groats Hall.

The building was one of those slabs of Queen Anne housing built on the road verge to save land, which are very impressive in front, but which prove to be very thin through, with a pathetic sort of pretentiousness which can never hope to deceive anybody who can step inside. Mr. Philby had a grand reception room for the parents, but most of his teaching was done in two large brew houses at the back. They were cold in winter and draughty in any weather, but James barely noticed the discomfort. Neither then, or ever, did he bother about ease of body. This was no virtue in him, he was so physically tough that as long as conditions were not actually harmful, he scarcely noticed them.

In those days the town of Kelvedon was a great Baptist centre. Mr. Philby had a bent head which was not unlike a bean, and shrewd monkey eyes. He was a leading resident and a great local snob. He combined this with a strong leaning towards the new order, somehow making himself appear more well bred by disapproving so strongly of well-bred goings on. His wife said he was more refined than the Prince Regent, a remark which made old Galantry laugh so much when James repeated it that he never dared quote the lady again.

James was not particularly clever at first, but he learned to write beautifully, and his penmanship became exquisite as he grew older.

Joseph Philby was a practical man, and as his school was

intended for the sons of professional men, not then so exclusive as they became later, he pleased the parents by instructing his pupils in sensible things like accounts, and the art of composing business letters, as well as enough Latin to decipher the footnotes in books of reminiscences. James enjoyed the actual business of writing, and also he liked the axioms he copied so carefully. He found the world so remarkably confusing and contradictory that he felt a few solid statements of fact were very comforting. Unfortunately some of the maxims in his copybook were not quite so reliable as others.

*“Good reputation is supported by honest actions”* he wrote truly enough six times in copper plate; and on the next page, *“Knowledge promotes and improves virtue”*—a far more dubious gospel. The one which fascinated him was the simple caution, *“Beware of imitating expensive persons,”* for he could not imagine why they in particular should be so specially sensitive.

The business letters were an education in themselves. James wrote notes from imaginary tea merchants in Thames Street to non-existent grocers; he recommended fictitious young men as travellers to the fur trade, and arranged credits for mythical business men from the continent.

The last letter in his book purported to come from a Mr. John Herapath, imagined by James to look remarkably like the sad young miller who sat three pews away from him in church. James was twelve and a half at the time, and was beginning to take life very seriously.

*Gentlemen,* he wrote, *I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 23rd instant, which should have been answered in course of post; but I was absent on a short journey expecting to collect sufficient to discharge your account.*

*I regret that I have not been successful, though you need not be under any misapprehension to your ultimate payment. You are aware I took this concern under manifest disadvantages, having to purchase a heavy and not very valuable stock for which prompt payment was made.*

*I am not fond of giving bills if they can possibly be avoided, but if it would be any satisfaction to you, you can draw upon me for the amount of one hundred and seventy-nine pounds twelve shillings and sixpence at thirty days date and may fully rely on the acceptance being met.*

*I am, Gentlemen, your obedient servant, John Herapath.*

This dignified and reassuring document was not entirely James's

own work, for he had help with the more formal phrases from Mr. Selsey, the usher, who seemed to think it slightly funny. But the main part of it was his own, and he was aware of its subtleties. He was proud of it, and looked for Mr. Philby's approbation when he should read it out in class. To his chagrin, when the great moment came, the Headmaster made no comment at all, but instead glanced rather curiously at the stolid little boy with the hooded eyes, before he put the copybook down and took up someone else's.

The fact was that already James was beginning to betray a flair for business. This was not altogether extraordinary, for his mother's people were by tradition absorbed by it. It was the bargaining, the give and take, the never-mentioned fight which went on all the time in business which delighted him. Mr. Philby observed this, and did not altogether approve. He was disappointed in James.

Although he was preparing most of his pupils for business life, he felt James owed it to them all to be different. He hoped James was going to be an Independent Gentleman, and as such ought in decency to be a bit of a fool in business. From Mr. Philby's point of view James's presence at school was a fortunate accident, and he sincerely hoped James was not going to let him down by being good at these commercial studies; only the day before James alone had been successful in answering the question: "If I buy fourteen yards of cloth for ten guineas, how many Flemish ells can I buy for two hundred and eighty-three pounds seventeen shillings and twopence at the same rate?"

Mr. Philby thought it a pity, and he told his wife that he was not at all sure he was doing his duty by the boy. Mrs. Philby, who was as plump and symmetrical as her husband was slender and bent, was even more upset, for she had received old Galantry when he had called to inspect the establishment, and had been pleasantly fluttered by him. She could not bear that such a distinguished stranger should ever think slightly of the school, and she begged Mr. Philby to speak to James. It was a delicate job for any schoolmaster, and Mr. Philby waited his opportunity. It came when he invited James to walk home with him from evensong behind the others.

"You are taking a greater interest in your work, Galantry, I see," said Mr. Philby.

"Yes, sir," said James brightly, looking up with happy anticipation.

"I am pleased to see it," continued Mr. Philby mendaciously, his bent head held even further on one side than usual. "Very pleased to see it. But there is one point I should like to mention. There are some subjects taught in this school that other boys will find more useful than you will. Do you understand me, Galantry?"

James was alarmed; this was not praise after all; something had gone wrong. He had made a mistake again somewhere.

"No, sir," he said truthfully. Mr. Philby sighed. The wretched little boy was going to be difficult.

"Bills," said Mr. Philby. "You are not likely ever to be in a position to give bills, Galantry."

Poor James was overcome with shame. True, he had only done what he had been taught to do, but he felt degraded, found out; discovered to be by nature the sort of person who would buy a shop, get into difficulties, and have to give bills, not be able to meet them, and have to be saved at the last moment by some sneering and contemptuous relative.

Mr. Philby knew a great deal about boys, and James's silence and crimson face awakened his conscience. "We won't take it to heart, Galantry," he said. "We'll just concentrate on the sort of thing which will be useful to you in after life, shall we?"

"Yes, sir," said James.

"Such as Latin," continued Mr. Philby hopefully.

James peered down a shady vista of years in which Latin would be of great use to him. It did not look attractive. He was dreadfully ashamed; it was another incident like the terrible affair of the mole; his "carty" nature had let him down again. That evening he discussed the problem with his only real friend.

This was a peculiar little boy called Samuel Thorpe. He was a year older than James, and was a small, white-faced creature with long, lank black hair who always seemed to have slightly unsuitable clothes. These were really extraordinarily varied; some very fine, and some positively ragged. Yet Samuel never minded. He always seemed to get away with his disadvantages somehow, for he skated over those who could be skated over, and had a genius for capitalizing the others. James admired him tremendously for this, and did his best to imitate his outlook, which in a man would have been cynical, and in a little boy was merely rum.

In the normal way James had a much better bedroom than

Samuel because, presumably, he paid more. Samuel slept in the north attic where a parapet blocked up at least three parts of the small window. He shared it with three others and would have been with them now, but a case of illness had occurred up there, and just for the night a narrow bed had been put up for him in James's room at the owner's invitation.

James was playing host, and doing it remarkably well. The day before, Donald had called in with a hamper from Dorothy, so that in the fashion of the time he was able to offer his guest a cold bird, some fat ham, a tart, and a glass of old Galantry's second-best port. Not only this but by a judicious bribe of at least two-thirds of the bottle of brandy which Dorothy always sent in case of illness, he had arranged with Mr. Philby's one manservant to bring them up a bowl of hot, weak punch to end the meal. As the two sat on their beds and sipped the hot, sour stuff, James brought up the subject of the letter as casually as he could, and was gratified to find Samuel interested. Samuel said he had been delighted with the letter and John Herepath Harduppe had become a character in his mind. To explain what he meant, he rose and bracing up his pantaloons until the ends fitted tightly round his calves, he stuck his wrists out of his jacket sleeves and struck an attitude of dignified melancholy.

"Alas, Mr. Galantry," he said, striving to make his voice less squeaky than usual. "I have not yet been successful, although you need not be under any misapprehension to your ultimate payment. Take heart, sir; the time will come!" And as he finished he looked up with such an expression of unconvincing optimism that James choked over his punch; a thing he would not have had happen for the world. When he recovered he came out with his story of the injustice of Mr. Philby.

Samuel left off fooling at once and sat down. "Old Philly knows which side his bread is buttered, James me boy," he said, looking very wise. "He's a clever old devil; lots of brains in Philly."

"I suppose so," agreed James, trying to echo the sophistication without success.

"No supposing about it, my dear fellow. He's thinking of his school, not of you, isn't he? You're the star boarder, Master Galantry. You're in the Academy's shop window. You've got to be the dear little swell that everyone would like to think their own sons are, but which they don't want them to be because they can't afford it! Clever old Philly! He can shout when he likes and keep

quiet when he likes. See how quiet he's kept about me."

James looked up with interest, but said nothing. There was a considerable mystery about Samuel. He himself gave several different versions of his home life, all highly coloured. At one time he had been badly bullied, but as the years had gone on he had gradually become accepted and had been left in peace.

Mr. Philby was never unkind to Samuel, but he contrived to keep him, as it were, at arms' length. James took a deep breath. He wanted to confide in somebody, and Samuel was very close to him.

"It worried me," he said, "because I can't really help it. There's a sort of streak which keeps coming out in me. I've never told anybody, but my mother was a gypsy."

"Pooh," said Samuel, "that's only romantic. My mother's an actress; that's why old Philly keeps me so quiet."

"An actress?" said James blankly. In spite of his fellow feeling for Samuel the information shocked him considerably. "I say! And your father's dead, isn't he?"

Samuel hesitated. His blue eyes looked almost black in their slitted sockets, and James thought they were smiling although the rest of his face was grave.

"My father was a noble soldier, my dear James," he said. "Covered all over with gold and wounds, I shouldn't wonder."

James was silent. He was not at all sure Samuel was serious. If he was, of course, it was a sad subject; if not, he was being indelicate. Still, if his mother really was an actress that explained much. Samuel was quite right. Mr. Philby was not a Non-Conformist, but he did live in a nest of them, and the Dissenter's view of the stage at that time was quite definite. It was Hell's own ante-room, and that was all there was to it.

James sat on his bed, his sticky fingers grasping his warm glass, and looked remarkably like Shulie. He was thinking how complicated it all was. The discovery that whole dozens of groups of adult persons honestly believed utterly different things filled him with that sense of mingled injustice and despair which must come once to every child.

Samuel appeared to be thinking on the same lines.

"Look'ee, James," he said. "If I had gone to one of the big schools, I should have got on better, always providing my mother had kept a coach. That's the first thing they ask you at Westminster,

you know. If you can say 'Yes,' they leave you alone. I should have been all right because actresses are in fashion among the swells. All the best people marry actresses. Lord Thurlow, Lord Craven, Mr. Becher, Robert Heathcoat, Mr. Coutts; every one of them married a woman on the stage. It's only among the thick-headed John Bulls that the actress is not considered fit for polite society.

"So you see, had it not been that I have no coach, I might be quite in the mode. I tell you, James, one thing becomes very clear to me. It's silly."

"What is?"

"All of it." Samuel was enjoying himself. "It's all mad. The world is unreasonable, James, ain't it? There's only one thing for poor devils like us to do in it, and that's to find out what is the admiration of the company we happen to be with, and then to ascribe to it. That's what I say."

James suspected he was quoting somebody, and was not so impressed as he might have been. "I shan't," he said, "I shall be myself."

"The Gypsy Squire?" said Samuel. "It sounds like a play, don't it? Let's write it."

James blushed. He wished he had not told Samuel about Shulie.

"No," he said angrily, "I'm not a gypsy. I shall be myself, my father's son."

Samuel was amused. "You'll get on, James," he said. "You've got the gift. You'll cheat without knowing it."

"I shan't!" James sprang up in sudden fury.

"You will. You will." Samuel avoided him deftly as he spoke. "You will, and I admire you for it. I do, really; I envy you. Keep away, James! It's not gentlemanly to hit an undersized little jackdaw like me."

James stayed his hand. He was genuinely fond of Samuel, and he was grateful to him for having an actress for his mother, but he felt superior to him when he talked like that, although he could not quite see where he was wrong.



## *Chapter Eight*

It was always a sore point with James, afterwards, that he could never remember much about the important occasion when old Lord Brett came to Groats to lunch. At least he could remember the occasion, and did so to his dying day, but the celebrity escaped him altogether. The distinguished author and critic made practically no impression on him, and it was another of the party who had such a remarkable effect upon him that it altered the whole course of his life.

It was Libby who arranged the literary gathering, and Young Will never forgave her, for he said she did it "to give a pack of scribblers a chance to gloat over his father's folly." It was one of those very spiteful accusations which have one small grain of truth in them, for Brett was a lion in his way and would hardly have found time on his short visit south to come all the way out to Groats unless he had heard the tale and found it sufficiently romantic to take his fancy.

Besides the celebrity, the party included Dorothea Barnum, the playwright, her brother, Libby of course, and Libby's dull old husband who had the sensational wart on his nose; but none of these caught the imagination of the young James. Throughout the entire day his attention was absorbed by another of the visitors, and the tall young lady who was with him.

He was a young man whose name was Edwin Castor, and the lady was his fiancée, a cold, unhappy-looking girl. Libby was chaperoning her, and she adopted a motherly attitude towards her, which James thought ridiculous and rather like a fat little hen trying to nestle a swan. However, it was the man who interested him, and nothing else that happened on that day or for many days afterwards, appeared to have any importance compared with that one, miraculous encounter.

From the first moment that James set eyes upon Castor he venerated the man. There is no other word for his sudden, flaming admiration. He found out all he could about him immediately, and after that quite openly followed him about. Castor was a friend of Lucius, and his senior at the Bar. Libby whispered the information

to James and told him to be quiet, for heaven's sake. James did not notice her manner; he was enchanted and he edged round the little group which was sitting out in the sunlight after the meal until he could settle down near his hero.

James never understood why Castor should have attracted him so unless it was that he was so entirely different from himself. There was no "cartyness" whatever about him. He was in the early thirties, not very tall but slenderly built, with a clear-skinned aesthetic face, a great dome of a head, and calmly intelligent grey-blue eyes. He was still golden-haired, and his hands, which delighted James, who could hardly take his eyes off them, were perfectly shaped. In one way, perhaps, they were horrible hands, almost conventionalized and inhuman, but James liked them because he had never seen any like them before. He sat on the grass and gaped at the man. Nothing he said or did escaped him, and his slightest movement and change of expression was noted and admired. He had such a remarkable ease; he seemed to be so free, so superior to all the emotional agonies which so bothered James in these days. It did not seem possible that he could ever be angry or ashamed; he had a grave, kindly smile, and there was a civilized remoteness about him which attracted the youngest Galantry out of all reason. James saw him as a sort of human 'Eclipse,' and he could not look away.

The lady was interesting also. She, too, had much of the same quiet grace, but whereas Castor was obviously happy she did look discontented in spite of her beautiful face. Apparently she was kind, though, for she smiled at James with a sudden warmth which nearly made him faint, it made him so proud.

Very little was said to him by either of them, and the really amazing thing is that he never saw either of them again, and yet they made such a difference to his life. However, it may be that it was that very fact which made the whole thing possible, for he never knew them well enough for them to become human and fallible in his eyes, and they remained to him a symbol of perfection.

While James was having this emotional experience, considerably more far-reaching in effect than first love, of which it took the place, the party of course was continuing. James saw none of it, it passed over his head, and when Shulie entertained the distinguished guests he did not share in the general flurry of polite

disappointment and embarrassment. He did not live until he was once again in peace sitting on the grass a few paces away from Castor's chair. Most of the others had gone off to inspect the glasshouses, but old Will Galantry remained and so did Libby's husband.

Galantry's gout was troubling him in these days, and once he was safely in his long chair he was very nearly immobile. Castor and Libby's husband had remained with their host out of politeness, and James stayed because he could not bear to let his hero out of his sight. While the old M.P. was rumbling away to Galantry, Castor talked to James, and the whole familiar world of Groats was made new and glorious by his condescension.

He had a very easy way with the child; there was a grave sensibleness in all he said, and James expanded beneath his charm. Encouraged to talk, he let himself go for one of the few times in his life. He told the stranger about his school and about the horses Jason bred, and betrayed his love of the countryside, his affection for Dorothy, and his tremendous admiration for his father.

Castor nodded his head approvingly, and his cold eyes were kindly and encouraging. His comprehension was not quite sympathy though, his understanding was not emotional or intuitive. James felt the difference and was enraptured by it. The man was so different from himself; somehow so safe. He lived from his head. That seemed to James to be so much more reliable than always being bothered by one's heart, as he was himself; so he went on talking to him for a long time, his dark face which would be swarthy later on became alive, and his eyes grew round and blacker in his excitement. Force and energy poured from him as he concentrated all the strength he possessed in an effort to tell, to express himself, to "put himself over." He was not very good at it, and some people might have found him a rather overpowering young person. But Castor did not seem to mind or even to notice it.

This thrilling conversation was broken up by Galantry suddenly ordering his son-in-law to take Mr. Castor to see the water-garden, sending James into the house to tell Richard and Donald to come and carry him indoors.

When James had at last escaped from his errands, the two visitors had vanished. He sought them out promptly meaning to attach himself discreetly to the party, even if he was only allowed to watch the magnificent stranger in silence. He could not find them

for a long time, for the grounds at Groats were laid out in a mazy fashion, but at last he did hear voices coming up the Yew Walk. There was no entrance to this leafy corridor save at the ends, and James had come upon it broadside. So he walked along on the wrong side of the hedge, meaning to join them at the top. He was not consciously eavesdropping, for it did not occur to him that their conversation might be private. Libby's husband had hardly registered upon him as a human being at all. He had noticed his wart with interest, but that was all, and the M.P. had been talking for some time before James grasped what he was saying. The rambling, querulous voice came floating to him over the high green wall which smelt so pleasantly of aromatic dust.

"A fool's errand," it said, "a fool's errand, my dear sir, and no venture for persons of taste. An old man is entitled to his follies, but they are not an edifying exhibition. I told my wife I saw nothing in the least romantic in the story, and I said, too, that if the only way to coax a literary lion was to throw him one's aged father's weaknesses, then for my part I'd let the noble animal roar at a distance. I see nothing interesting in that poor slut, nor in the little horsey cub. But there was no stopping my wife; she's a strong-minded woman, and she's fascinated by literary talent. All families have linen of this sort in their presses, but damme if I see any good purpose in making a plaguey, uncomfortable pilgrimage to sniff at them."

A laugh from Castor fluttered over the hedge, and James with his ears burning listened for the words of the oracle, the sentence from the prince who had become miraculously in an hour the one person whose opinion really mattered in the world.

"I agree with you that it was unwise and ungentelemanly of us to come," said Edwin Castor, with sufficient sincerity to destroy at least some of the pomposity of the fashionable phraseology. "But to me it is remarkably interesting, quite an idyll in its way. Indeed, the only thing which makes the story pathetic, to my mind, is the fact that the old man should have married the girl. The child, you see, being no bastard, is in such an unnatural and unhappy position since the story of his birth is so well known. Had the whole affair taken the more usual course, and there had been no wedding ceremony, no one would have dreamed of commenting upon it, and your wife would then, if I may say so, have never gone out of her way to attempt to establish the alliance as a romantic love story.

The boy would have run loose with those horses he loves so well, have had a little money, have married some good, hard-working country girl, and lived a very useful, happy life among simple people who would think all the more of him for being his father's son. As it is, he must ever be at a disadvantage, for he favours his mother, and even if he escapes her influence, the recollection of her can never permit him to have quite the assurance and address which Society now demands of a man of position."

"He does not appear to me to lack assurance," grumbled Libby's husband. "He seemed to have quite enough to say for himself, if not too much."

"Oh, I beg to disagree with you!" Castor's tone was authoritative. "He appeared to me to beg, even to implore reassurance. A disturbing child! Do you know it occurred to me when I was listening to him that both in a past and in a future age this tremendous insistence of ours upon the nice importance of manners and breeding, may well have seemed and still seem again to be absurd."

"Really?" The M.P. was interested. "You do see the revolution coming, do you? Some say it will, but for my own part I don't. John Bull is not the same stuff as the Frenchies. I should not have taken you for an alarmist, Castor."

"I'm not, I assure you." James's oracle was laughing again. "I was merely moved to compassion by my talk with that disturbing boy. I was merely thinking that if by chance these very fine social distinctions should prove to be but a fashion, then how very unfortunate for that particular young man that he should have been born into the age he has."

Libby's husband grunted. "Fashion or no, it's a thing to which I subscribe," he said. "You talk damned dangerously. You're a young man and, if you'll forgive a word from an old one, I should discourage myself from my compassions, if I were you. I can see that young whelp being a nuisance to my wife's family the whole of his life. He may turn out well enough, but I doubt it. With a mother like that, what hope has he? The woman is not ill-bred, she's scarce civilized. The devil knows what mountebank went into her making. The old man must be mad. The boy's very nearly a blackamoor to start with. Fashion!" he repeated, as if the word had annoyed him. "I'll wager it goes far deeper than fashion."

“Few things go deeper than fashion,” objected Castor. “As I see it, circumstances of that boy’s birth may destroy the happiness of his whole life, and yet they are purely artificial circumstances. In some other period they might easily not exist at all. I only say he is unfortunate. To me that is interesting, that is all.”

Libby’s husband did not reply, and on the other side of the yew hedge James hesitated. Then, as was typical of him, he squared his heavy shoulders and plodded on his unaltered way to meet and join the two at the end of the Walk. Neither of them ever guessed that he had heard. It was typical of him, too, that his admiration for Castor was not in the least diminished. To James it had been ‘Eclipse’ speaking, and he was not unreasonable.

## *Chapter Nine*

One autumn night, with a "God bless you, my dear, dear good girl" to Shulie, in whose arms he lay, old Galantry died. He had a melodramatic storm setting for his passing, and the trees in the park threw themselves about like old women mourners in weeping ecstasy against a blazing sky. The wind got into the house, and the bed was like a tent in a tempest; the curtains streaked with shafts of yellow candle-light, while outside the great drums of heaven rolled as though for a conqueror. It was a most unsuitable ending to a life which had never been exactly heroic. None of his children was present, for the moment came comparatively suddenly, after a long, mild illness. One minute he was his normal amused self, the next he was as grave and as nakedly sincere as Shulie had ever seen him, and the next he was no longer there. No one knew where he went to any more than they knew where a tune goes after it is played. His dying was that kind of loss but no more, for his ingredients, the notes as it were, which when played together made him old Will Galantry and no one else, persisted of course, as do anyone else's, but many of them in little sequences which were unmistakably his own.

All the things he had parted with consciously or unconsciously were duplicated and did not vanish with him. In Shulie, in his children, in his friends, enemies, servants and acquaintances he was divided and repeated and still alive. Anything constructive in these presents (say a sound digestion passed on to a son, or a trick of taking a tolerant view taught to a servant) had added its little to those forces for permanence and perfection in humanity, and so survived on earth.

When his poor old body lay limp in Shulie's arms it was no more like itself in full maturity than a withered laburnum pod in January is like the Maytime spray. It was done; finished with; empty, and no more use to him or anyone else. Old Will Galantry had had his tune played right through and was dispersed again, and his soul and score went into God's great pocket to be kept no doubt, if it was good enough, for the Final Concert.

When Shulie saw that he was dead, she drew away from him quietly and went into the guest-room where she had been sleeping

for the previous night or two. There she washed herself very thoroughly and changed her clothes down to the skin before she even told anybody. This behaviour scandalized Dorothy and the rest of the servants, who saw in it something disrespectful and shocking. Shulie gave them no explanation, and indeed had none in her forward mind. They had a terrible time with her afterwards, a nightmare experience for them, for they were very nearly as worried and uprooted as she was.

They got the special old woman whose privilege it was to attend to important layings-out down from the village through the storm, and Shulie was kept under lock and key until her work was done, and all was made decent and correct.

But as soon as Donald had ridden off to the doctor and the attorney with the news, Dorothy sent the maids away and let the widow out again.

It was to her eternal credit that no one ever knew exactly what happened next that night upon the first floor of the creaking old house, which lay cowering under the fury of wind and rain; but the old woman from the village, who was still downstairs refreshing herself, carried home a tale of the sound of a tremendous quarrel which had been heard right down in the kitchen. She also said that she saw the gypsy, impassive save for her little black eyes, which were quick and bright like a lizard's, sitting on the top of the stairs with a lighted taper in her hand. Behind her, Dorothy stood like a sentinel across the threshold of the master's bedroom, guarding the corpse, so the old woman said. None of Shulie's descendants were told the tale, but generations of little village children were frightened by that strange picture, the explanation of which only the few who knew the gypsy habit of burning their dead in their caravans, could guess.

Anyhow, when morning came and the bright day spread over the wreckage under the trees, and the birds plumed their feathers, and the wood animals scraped the twigs out of their silk fur, Galantry's body lay stiff and at peace in the big, gilt bed, which was as tidy as a carved tomb.

It was the maids clearing up after the funeral who found that the red curtains were charred in several places where the flame had touched them, and knew then that Dorothy had averted yet another scandal.



There was one scandal though which Dorothy did not avoid. That day after the storm, before Young Will arrived, before James came from school, before even the officials appeared, Shulie went away. No one saw her go or knew if she stood for a moment with her arms spread out, letting the wind play round her, and then, since there was nothing any more to hold her back, plunged strongly out into the green and brown world as free and thoughtless as a blackbird out of a skep, or if she crept away sadly, or if she went in tears. Nobody at Groats knew anything about Shulie any more; her departure was as swift and extraordinary as a conjuring trick. At dawn she was sitting in the cold guest room, and ten minutes later she was nowhere in the house or grounds. It took them all some time to grasp what had happened, and then they were shocked.

There had been an encampment of dark-faced people down in the hollow behind Jason's house for some little time; since soon after Galantry had taken to his bed in fact. But none of the household had given them much thought until they noticed that as soon as the old man died they packed up quietly and went away. They disappeared as gypsies do; one moment they were there and the next there was no sign of them.

The gay, narrow-waisted waggons which looked like rolls of parchment tied in the middle; the strings of horses and the squealing children had vanished, and with them had gone Shulie. And so had her finery, and a little iron box Galantry had had made for her some time before.

No one quite realized old Galantry's part in this flight until afterwards, and then they could hardly credit it. Three days after he died, he was carried down the lane on a waggon and laid beside his first wife. Dorothy did not permit herself fanciful thoughts as a rule, but she did allow a grim smile to pass over her lips as she wondered what *that* lady would have to say to him.

Young Will and Lucius walked in front of the cortège, while James, looking as unlike them as a square, smooth-haired mongrel in a litter of spaniels, walked behind. All the time as the stones rattled under his shoes he was wondering with the wretchedness of forsaken youth, what in the world was to happen to him now.

When the practical earth had received all the part of old Galantry that was no use any more, his will was read over in his library, and apart from his elder children, the whole gathering was a trifle nervous. James noticed it in spite of his own alarm. He could feel

the emotion in the room, and saw very vividly the sudden disintegration of the small world which had revolved round his father. The old man's power had never struck him so forcibly before, and in spite of his anxiety he noticed that he liked it, and was very grateful that it should have existed.

As old Galantry's plans became apparent nearly everybody present was surprised and impressed. The estate was fairly divided between the elder children, as was expected and thought proper, but the other provisions were not so conventional. The great surprise was the arrangement he had made for Shulie. It was not stated how much she had received, but it was made quite clear that she had been given her portion and was expected to retire with it to her own people. This legalizing and condoning of her abrupt departure was startling. It put people in their places; all their worrying about "the woman" was snubbed and dismissed in a couple of lines.

Young Will's wife tortured herself for years with speculations about the jewels Shulie must be squandering, but she never discovered what they were, or even if there had been any.

James received fifteen thousand pounds, exactly half the sum left to the other younger sons, and to everyone's amazement Dorothy, of all people, was appointed his guardian until he should come of age. Dorothy herself was left a cottage, certain furniture, and one thousand pounds carefully invested. Jason received most of the horses under his care, and a stretch of pasture with a house upon it, and he wept with gratitude and probably relief at the intimation.

The two lawyers made it clear they thought it all very generous, and all the more responsible people present felt somehow that old Galantry had rebuked them each, personally, by being so intelligent and settling his affairs so neatly. The picture of him as a selfish old lunatic had been so well established for so long that this sudden evidence of his sense and discernment somehow made his behaviour seem even more outrageous, for it proved that he knew, and always had known, exactly what he was doing. Indeed, once his desires had been made known there was very little for anybody to do except for each man to take his portion. It was all arranged, there was nothing left to quarrel about.

There everything might have rested had it not been for Lucius. He was a lawyer himself, and was constitutionally incapable of leaving well alone. He was a smaller man than his father had been,

rounder and with sharper eyes. He had made up his mind what was going to happen to Shulie and James as soon as his father died, long before the event happened. In his own mind he had settled the business in a way which appeared to him to be entirely logical; so to have his plans upset like this irritated him intensely. Although the matter was nothing whatever to do with him, he set about 'putting things right' as soon as possible.

Where Shulie was concerned he could do nothing, of course, since old Galantry had forestalled any move of that sort. Undiscouraged, he continued his plans for James. After dinner on the night of the funeral, he went into the library alone and sent for Dorothy. James had not been asked to dine with his half-brothers, and had not done so, and over the meal Lucius had told his brothers what he had prepared for James and Young Will had agreed absently.

Once in the library Lucius told Dorothy very graciously that she was no longer a servant. He joked her gently about being now a woman of independent means, and asked her to sit down. Dorothy thanked him, but said she preferred to stand. Her face was impassive as usual, and she permitted him to think that she had made up her mind to cling to the old ways. This, as it happened, was not true at all.

Lucius sat back in his chair. He looked lean and intelligent, quick-witted and self-important, and was quite unaware that she thought him an insufferable and dangerous little man, and was remembering, with contempt, certain unfortunate weaknesses he had had as a child. In her heart she was desperately afraid for her darling, and her wits were as sharp as cat's claws as she waited to defend him.

Lucius began to explain that he had been thinking a great deal about James. "Fifteen thousand pounds," he said, "is a great deal of money for a youngster in that position. It is too much. Half would have been wiser. Still it has been done, and there it is. My dear father evidently had a very soft spot for the child; men do sometimes feel like that about the son of their old age."

Dorothy made no comment, but seeing that she still looked respectful, if not very intelligent, he went on trying to make himself very clear.

"The important thing, you know, Dorothy," he said, "is that this

boy must be protected from himself. If he continues at school for another year and fritters away his time picking up undesirable acquaintances, until he comes into full possession of his little fortune, he'll run through it in a year or so, and will then have to fall back with God knows what encumbrances upon a family whose resources will not be at all what they once were. That must never be allowed to happen. You do understand that, don't you?"

Still she did not speak, and he began to treat her as if she was a dummy at which he was rehearsing a speech.

"Yes, yes," he said, "you probably understand the situation better than I do myself. After all, you know the boy and you knew his mother, and you know how dangerous little traits do come out in children."

He spoke fluently, for he had been trained to it, and certainly convinced himself. He was certain he was doing the right thing in the right way, and that he was deceiving himself and refusing his half-brother the protection and training of the family (an asset which, after all, was the boy's by right quite as much as was the money which had been left him) never crossed his mind.

Dorothy listened to him and her eyes were veiled with caution. He smiled at her, and felt as old Galantry had done, what a good old fool she was. He went on outlining his plans for James. The boy, he said, had only one hope, and that was to be apprenticed at once to a good, respectable trade. He was sure Dorothy would understand that. They must bind him now when he was fifteen, and then in seven years' time he could probably buy a partnership, and still have enough money left to buy the other partner out when the right moment came. He was sure Dorothy would see that everything depended upon these first six or seven years, and upon them finding the right man to form the youngster's character and to give him the necessary discipline. Fortunately Lucius did know just the man, a master tailor, his own tailor as it happened; a very sensible, respectable sort of person who would take the youngster into his house and give him the correction he needed while he taught him his trade.

Lucius brought the suggestion out like a surprise present. He saw Dorothy flush, and assumed it was with pleasure. Again he asked her to sit down, and again she refused. He liked her respectful bearing, but the more he saw of her the more he marvelled at his father giving her the guardianship of so much money.

“Don’t fret, Dorothy,” he said, “I’ll see to it all! I’ll talk to Crowther, the tailor, and have the articles drawn up. We’ll do our best to make a respectable tradesman of the little cub, and who knows, but he may grow to be as wealthy as any of us.”

Dorothy bobbed, and went out. He was afraid she had not understood a word of his harangue, but he thought she was grateful to him for making it. Once outside the library door, however, Dorothy became a different woman. Indignation blazed in her, and she became very purposeful. It had not occurred to her to express herself openly, and this was nothing to do with respect. Dorothy had little or no respect for Lucius Galantry; she did not suspect that he owed his tailor money, and therefore had every reason for wishing to present him with a valuable apprentice; she assumed this was so, and was as convinced as if he had told her in so many words. She was quite right, of course. A knowledge of Lucius and a clear view of the situation simply added up to that answer. She knew her own limitations also, though, and she saw herself in a difficult position. She knew that lawyers were remarkably tricky and she knew herself to be an ignorant woman who could not even read. So she went her own way to protect her trust, and behaved in a somewhat extraordinary manner.

The first thing she did was to find James and pour out the whole story to him, allowing her anger full expression. They were up in his bedroom at the far side of the house at the time and were sitting together on the low seat under the casement, talking in whispers. James listened to Dorothy with his head sunk in his shoulders, and his face as expressionless as her own had been. All the same, she knew that he was deeply angry.

The affront was actual, inasmuch as Lucius would no more have thought of apprenticing his own son to a tailor than Jason would have thought of breaking a son of Eclipse to the plough. The insult burned into James and he swore never to forgive Lucius or Lucius’ children. At this particular moment there was little time for dwelling upon it, however, for the danger was urgent, and already Dorothy had made up her mind what was best to be done. If James was out of the way, she thought, she could keep sullen and quiet and hold her ground.

She explained this to James and very reluctantly he agreed at last to hide for the time being. The move went hard against his dignity, which was growing enormous, but he saw the sense of it for after

all where freedom is concerned, possession, he saw, is the whole ten points of the law. He was also privately excited by the thought of going off alone into the mysterious outside world. The desire to get out and away had often tormented him in the past, but hitherto Dorothy had always discouraged it firmly and with a sort of superstitious fear in her face, as if she saw nomadic gypsy tendencies appearing in him before her eyes.

Now that she was urging him to go he felt a little lost, and yet deeply stirred. All the same he was not quite the stuff of which lone adventurers are made; friends, human beings on his side, were the essentials of life to him. He had only one friend in the whole of the world beyond Groats, and he thought at once of Samuel Thorpe and the address he had given him.

"I think I will go to Ipswich!" he announced, and if he had said to China it would hardly have sounded further away to either of them.

"Very well," Dorothy agreed. "It had better be to-night." They were both being tremendously brave.

Lucius and Young Will never realized how James came to run away, or dreamed that he had any inside help. While they were discussing the future over old Galantry's brandy, Dorothy and James came quietly down the stairs, stole out of the back door into the mild rain, and across the fields to Jason and his wife.

They held a counsel of war in the big, farm kitchen, and sat round the white scrubbed table with the children asleep in the box beds round the chimney, the black hams hanging overhead, and the dogs dozing amid the fresh sand.

It was a picture James never forgot, for it had the elusive quality of high romance in it.

Jason and Mrs. Jason were as shocked by Lucius' suggestion as Dorothy had been. It was not that there was anything particularly frightful in tailors as a race, but it did infuriate them to think that James might be put down and robbed of the little birthright which was his own, and they took it very personally because they felt they had taken a great hand in rearing him.

Jason sat at the head of the table. He was in his shirt sleeves, his buff waistcoat tightly buttoned over his wiry body, and his stretched skin shining over his cheek bones. He was extremely serious, and on either side the two women in their caps and fichus

leant towards him earnestly. James always remembered them in that moment of arrested motion, with the lamplight from above falling on their foreheads, and the lower parts of their faces dark in the shadow.

Dorothy had brought a soft, leather bag with her. It was bound round the mouth with string, and while she talked she emphasized her words by banging it gently on the table so that her tale was punctuated by the soft chink of gold. They made all arrangements very carefully, and in minute detail.

James had sense enough not to mention that Samuel's mother was an actress, but he did say he was a school friend; and in the end the choice of Ipswich as a refuge was approved, partly because of this, and partly because Jason's wife had a brother who had an inn there. Mrs. Jason was delighted at the project, and she rushed upstairs to get a silver locket for James to give to her brother, so that the man would know he came from her. James had to listen over and over again to the messages he had to give, to an account of how to find the house, and how it was called 'The Golden Boar.' Mrs. Jason said he would know it at once by the sign of a beautiful hog with a crown on its head, which hung, not sideways, but flat over the door.

She gave him meticulous instructions. He was to go into the coffee-room and look about him until he saw a thick, well set-up young man, with a face like Mrs. Jason. Then he was to go up to him and show him the locket, and when the stranger had got over his surprise, James was to step back and say: "I come from young Joan. Her who married Dick Jason who worked for my father. Give me the best room. I am a gentleman and can pay my way, but do not tell anyone I am here."

It was not quite the speech that James would have rehearsed himself, but Mrs. Jason took him through it very carefully, and insisted that if he only said it right, her brother Jed Fletcher would lay him down and die for James, which seemed handsome enough.

It was all very homely and comforting, and was also, of course, something which no money in the world could have bought. Jason himself went up into the loft to find an old-fashioned riding saddle with pack hooks upon it, and he took this out into the darkness.

James guessed which beast he was to be given, and understood that Jason was obeying a secret, dramatic sense in choosing it for

him. It would be Red Betty, of course; the thick little mare which Jason had bred for an experiment; the daughter of Mandrake out of Bess, the little old no-account dam.

Jason had grown very fond of the half-breed, and was being very generous in handing her over, but he knew he was doing the right thing. They were all very simple people.

The farewells were said in the stables, just as the dawn was breaking and vivid yellow streaks were appearing below the indigo rain clouds. James and the mare had both been fed, they were both clean, both strong, and eager. James had sixty-three pounds, half of all Dorothy had in the world until the lawyers paid her, strapped under his belt.

He was not too sure of the way, but was confident he could find it, and he carried their trust and all Dorothy's heart with him.

She put a great bony arm round his shoulders, with embarrassed tenderness, just before he mounted. "Send me word by the one I'll send you," she said, "and don't do nothing I wouldn't have you do. When this fancy idea is all blown over, I'll come for ye. Look out for yourself, my little old boy."

James hugged her, and was appalled to feel her tremble in his arms. He turned away quickly lest he should weaken also; he scrambled up on the mare who slipped quietly out of the doorway and over the cobbles, as sure and light on her strong little feet as a dog.

He was on the high road by the time the sun came up over the edge of the county, and he sat for a moment looking into it.

Groats was a long way behind him. He could feel all its ties, all its warmth, all the sentiment and love of his lifetime lying there like bedclothes he had thrown aside.

When he rode on again he was thinking of Edwin Castor, now a transfigured image in his mind. Edwin Castor, he felt, would ride quietly into the future with dignity and an open mind, sure of his place in the world and certain of his ability to remain in it whatever befell. James did his best to imitate Edwin Castor.



## *Chapter Ten*

In after life James forgot his first impressions of 'The Golden Boar' when it opened its greasy, leathery coat to him, and took him in; for ever afterwards he knew it so well that it soon lost the picturesque vividness of a strange place. In the back of his mind, though, there always remained a picture of the sign as he first saw it, dripping wet, and so mean and dirty beside his expectations.

The pig in the picture was a comical, painted pig, pink on a blue ground, and the crown on its head was an ingenuous little crown made out of half a golden beer barrel. It looked very homely, not at all grand or dashing, as James had unreasonably assumed it would be; indeed, there was nothing grand or dashing about Mrs. Jason's brother's inn, its virtues were of a different sort.

In many ways 'The Golden Boar' was a fortress, a shabby bastion scarred and tried, home-made and full of contrivances, but ever manned against the stranger without the gate. These are not the ideal attributes for any inn, of course, but then the Fletchers were not by nature publicans, and 'The Golden Boar' did its own kind of trade in its own obstinate way.

James arrived in a downpour and turned the little mare into a yard which ran water like a ford. It was just on dark and the lanterns hanging under the stable roof were made brighter by the rain on them.

The man who came out to meet him did look remarkably like Mrs. Jason, but he was too young to be her brother and he was not at all friendly. James let him explain that the inn had no accommodation, never had had any, and the chances were, never would, and then produced the locket and spoke his little piece.

It is always impressive to see a charm work, the blue litmus turning red, and on this occasion James, who was very exhausted and tired of being alone, was gratified by the small miracle. The personality before him changed at once, and the young man became like Mrs. Jason, not only in face. At once he became both mysterious and excited. The two family traits sprang up like dogs from a hearth. It was evident that he had scarcely heard the message and that the locket was unknown to him, but he

recognized the procedure, the whole gesture, as something his own. He pulled off his hat at once.

"Yes, yes," he said. "We'll tie up the little old mare and give her a few squashed oats. And then I'll take you along, if you'll forgive me for being so personal, and show you off to my father. I didn't quite take you in in this 'ere light. Now I get me eyes on you that makes all the difference."

The sweeping insincerity tumbled off his tongue as easily as a rhyme, and he scuttled round the mare just like Mrs. Jason used to scuttle round her kitchen table.

He flicked off a girth here, and ripped up a strap there, with little flourishes of innocently ostentatious efficiency. He was very deft, but he wanted this casual stranger to see that he was, so James, since he had been brought up by Dorothy who was very shrewd in such matters, knew at once that he was one of those people who must always think about themselves doing a thing, instead of concentrating upon the job itself, and so was destined never to be quite a champion at anything.

It was important that this should have been the first thing that James did learn about Whippy Fletcher, for it was a thing which explained him, and the rest of him which was most lovable was thus never obscured to James, who remained his friend until he died.

Being "shown off" to Whippy's father promised to be something of an ordeal. Whippy approached his own back door like a conspirator, waving James first on, and then back again as if they were going to see the Pope. James was inclined to protest at this treatment until it occurred to him that Edwin Castor would preserve a graceful calm in any such situation.

All the same, after they had sidled down a narrow passage, passed several lighted doorways revealing little nests of smoke and chatter, they paused at last before a very low door upon which Whippy knocked softly, and the truly tremendous roar which greeted them seemed to justify the preliminary caution.

James followed Whippy into a low-ceilinged kitchen which was very bright and clean, but so packed with miscellaneous oddments of all kinds that he could scarcely see across it. By the fire sat Mrs. Jason's brother, Jed, and a very impressive old person he was at first sight. His bandaged foot was propped up, as he said himself,

like a gentleman's, and he looked if not a king upon his throne at least a baron in his castle. He was a plump little man with jowls, and a circular melon of a belly, and he sat in a wooden armchair which was too small for him, so that he looked like a turkey's egg in a cup. His thick, white hair was brushed into a breaker on the top of his head, and his small eyes lighted on the intruders wrathfully.

"I o'nt have it! I o'nt have it," he said. "You be off to bed, Whippy. I o'nt be disturbed at me thinking times."

The broad country accent, homely and packed with emphasis, welcomed James if the words did not, and he was glad when Whippy, advancing spaniel-fashion, produced the locket. His father took it and looked at it as if he were being asked to value it, but gradually recognition dawned on his face, and at once it was as if the whole fount and spring of the family's eccentricities appeared before James's eyes. The wrath died out of the old man and he became blank and important. He set the locket on the table before him, with magisterial solemnity, and addressed his son.

"Goo you into bed, boy," he said, although it was scarce nine o'clock and Whippy was over twenty and not an idiot. "I won't have ye crawling about the public rooms to all hours! Be off! I'll attend to the gentleman myself."

Whippy went off like a lamb. His father waited until the door closed behind him, and as soon as he heard the latch, lowered his bandaged foot to the ground and got himself out of his chair; an operation which was like drawing a cork from a bottle.

When he was safely upright he addressed James in an entirely new character.

"You'll forgive me for not getting up when you first come in, sir," he said. "What would you be wanting, if you please?"

The sudden leap to formal inn-keeping was unexpected, but James saw at once that now was the time when the speech Mrs. Jason had outlined should be produced. Although it had sounded ridiculous when she had told it to him, it was in point of fact just exactly the right thing to say to this particular man, and it occurred to James how interesting it was that one-half of anything may well appear idiotic when seen without the other.

So he said his piece.

"I come from young Joan, who married Dick Jason, who worked for my father. Pray give me the best room. I am a gentleman, and

can pay my way, but do not tell anyone that I am here.”

“Ah!” said Jed Fletcher, with complete comprehension, and he set a chair before the fire and begged James to take a glass of the hot Hollands and water he was drinking himself.

When James was seated, Jed sat down also, and leant forward confidently.

“That’s very interesting,” he said. “You and me must have a word together, if you’ll excuse of me being so forward.”

After this pretentious opening he was at first rather disappointing, for he asked after the “little old girl,” his sister, and revealed that he did not realize that she was a day older than when he had last seen her some twenty years before. As he went on talking he soon began to show that he knew a surprising amount about all that had happened at Groats, even to the latest news about old Galantry’s death. In some ways James found him a very terrifying old man. He made no reference to any of these things directly, but let it become clear from little hints that he knew much, and all the time he sat and watched the visitor, his eyes shining under his low forehead and great cockatoo’s curl.

At that time James had no inkling of the grape-vine of carters, carriers, whips and postillions through which all news travelled so fast, and he was startled into awkwardness.

“I expect you’ve heard of my mother,” he said, blaming Mrs. Jason. His host did not appear to hear him, and afterwards James discovered that among the many gifts Jed possessed, this was one of the most remarkable. Sometimes he appeared not to have heard quite literally, so that the visitor was convinced that his own words had been thought and not uttered.

On this occasion James was not quite sure.

Jed sipped his hot spirits thoughtfully and appeared engrossed in a vast inner world. Presently he said as calmly as if James had told him all:

“A young gentleman like yourself often finds it necessary to lie low until his relations and the lawyers have done chattering over his heritage. You’ll find this old house the safest place you could have come to, especially as no doubt you’ve a wonderfully good eye for a hack. This is a right good old place for cattle.”

James said nothing, and presently Jed said unexpectedly:

“You’ll excuse me enquiring into what don’t concern me, but do

you know any gentlemen in the town?"

James said he knew Samuel Thorpe, and had been at school with him.

"Mr. Samuel Thorpe." Jed turned the name over on his tongue once or twice, and then as if a most unexpected number had popped up in his mind, he regarded James with veiled curiosity. "Little darkish kind of a fellow a year or two above your age; lives down the Butter Market?"

"Yes," said James firmly. "With his mother."

"Ah, yes. With his mother."

There was another pause before he relaxed disarmingly.

"We have to be wonderfully careful not to give offence in my line of business," he said naïvely. "However, likely you'll understand me. The little old girl, Joan, she'd have the hide off me. (Know she would, she's the spit of her mother.) She'd flay me if you was to come to any mishap through no fault of your own while you was under my roof. You'll pardon me for being so personal, but if you're going down to the theatre to see your friends to-morrow, as no doubt you'll be inclined to, you'll give me great pleasure if you'll accept of the loan of my little old safe to lock up any valuables you might be a-carrying about with you. This is a remarkable strange town, as you'll be aware, and there's a wonderful lot of queer persons in it who soon get to know if a young fellow is on his own. I do hope and pray you're not affronted with an old man who's only thinking of his young sister."

The old Will Galantry in James began to laugh at these protestations, a reaction which took Jed by surprise. He went off like an alarm clock at once, protesting that he was a nervous old fool, that sons of his own had made him wise, and that James must forgive his forwardness which had got him into trouble before.

James begged him to be at ease. The suggestion which had seemed to be so very prudent was a relief to him for Dorothy's savings were worrying him considerably. So he accepted the offer at once, and with a gratitude which sealed a lasting friendship between them. Jed was delighted. He produced the safe at once, which turned out to be a small iron sea chest, as heavy as an anvil. It contained the deeds of the house, a considerable quantity of money, two or three horse pedigrees not worth the paper they were written on, and his marriage lines—all of which he showed James.

The box was kept under his chair in the daytime and under his bed at night, and was certainly secure.

James took four sovereigns out of Dorothy's bag and had no hesitation in consigning the rest to the Fletcher store. Jed insisted on giving him a receipt for the money, and he put the locket in the chest as well. Then he made all fast again and returned the key to its hiding-place, which was on a string round his neck.

"Same as you've treated me, I'll treat you," he said with earnest honesty. "I shall shake hands on it!"

It was all a little unusual and theatrical; but so was Jed and his sister, too, for that matter, not to mention Whippy. So James took the hand and the bargain was sealed.

What James never did quite realize even to the end of his days was that in escaping being bound apprentice to a tailor, what he actually did was to bind himself to a master horse copper and publican. But even so, it is very doubtful if anybody on earth could have compared with Jed as a mentor, trainer and foster parent. It was an odd turn for events to take, but the Dance of the Years is always taking such turns, and after all it is how the dancers tread their individual measures which makes their performance what it is, the path being, as it were, but their place on the platform for the time being.

## *Chapter Eleven*

James's first meeting with the Thorpe family was a momentous occasion for him. Whatever he expected of Samuel's mother, he was certainly not prepared for what he found when he went round to Number 7, The Butter Market. It was a bonnet shop, for one thing, and after diving nervously through it he came up a narrow flight of stairs to a nest of rooms on the first floor. He was hesitating before the three closed doors, which lined the shabby landing, when the centre one opened and a petite, but very anxious looking woman put her head out, looked at him, and said forlornly:

"Oh! It isn't you!"

She was so charming and so helpless that James was stirred. He began to explain most anxiously who he was and how he had come to see Samuel, but from the moment he set eyes on her his mind was more on her troubles than on his own. She did not let him get very far though, for she withdrew as suddenly as she had come and left him, although embarrassed, yet very concerned for her. He was still wondering how he could possibly help her when one of the other doors opened, and Samuel himself came out.

He was obviously astounded to see his visitor, and also, it seemed to James, a little disconcerted, but in a moment he recovered himself and came forward laughing, with the same self-deprecating and derisive smile, which James knew so well in him at school. It was a sign that he was bringing all his defences into position, and was preparing to flutter and skate his way out of any embarrassment which might be coming his way.

"How d'ye do, my dear James?" he said. "Come in. My mother reported you too young and too pretty for a dun. What are you doing here, my dear fellow? Come to spy behind the curtain?"

His voice was still squeaky, James noticed, but it had grown some new affectations.

"Come to find you, Sam," said James, taking his hand with a warmth which touched Samuel, and made him feel once again the more important person of the two.

"In trouble, James?" he demanded hopefully.

The younger boy laughed, and his bright teeth and eyes shone

against his dark skin in the dusk of the passage.

"I'm in hiding, Samuel," he said.

"Really?" The information worked like a charm. Such a story was clearly a password to the Thorpe lodgings and family heart. Samuel was frankly delighted.

"Come in! Come in!" he said, as if James was being actively pursued. "Come in here! We're very much *en famille*, of course. Ah, yes. James, this is my half-sister, Phœbe."

The final piece of information came just in time, for James, who had followed him into the room, was already backing out again. It was not a large room and was lit by a single window high in the wall, and to James it presented an astounding picture since it seemed to be as tightly packed with furniture as a box-room, and to be littered with drapery, baskets, bottles, lion-skins, and the most extraordinary collection of odds and ends he had ever seen.

However, he had little opportunity to look about him, for standing on a table in the centre was by far the most remarkable object of all. This was a girl. She was about fifteen years old and she was not wearing a skirt. The top part of her was muffled in a voluminous garment which looked to James like one of his father's old ruffled shirts; while the rest was clad simply in a pair of very short black drawers to the top of her thighs, and a pair of short black stockings bound just above her knees with black ribbon. The translucent, white hiatus between the two was in the process of disguise to judge by the pot of lamp-black at her feet and the brush in her hand.

Until that moment all young women might have been solid and mermaid-like above the knee as far as James was concerned, and he regarded her with simple, undisguised dismay; while she, seeing his face, began to laugh at him.

That was the first time James ever saw Phœbe, and that time she had the advantage of him. It was one of those sly little tricks of fortune. Phœbe went on feeling that she had the advantage of James until it was too late. But that belongs to later in the story.

At this time they were still children, and when James could at last bring himself to look at her the first thing he noticed was that she was not at all like Samuel.

She was a tall girl with bones too slender for her height, and fair hair which was now almost straw-coloured. On the other hand, her



eyes were a very dark and intelligent blue which turned almost as black as James's own when she was interested. For the rest, she was not exactly beautiful, but had an ill-drawn, peculiarly expressive face with great charm about it. Between herself and Samuel there existed, James noticed, a bond of comradeship which was almost a confederacy. At first he was jealous of her place in Samuel's affections, but afterwards when he heard them talking he was fascinated by the strength which he saw the union gave them both. He had never known this kind of friendship himself; this welding of contemporaries allied against circumstance, and he recognized its powers for defence, and would have liked to have joined it.

The more the two chattered the more obvious it became, and James growing more at ease listened to them eagerly. He did not altogether approve of the new world they showed him, and he swallowed nothing wholesale, but he took it all in with great curiosity.

He gathered that Phœbe was going to play one of the little Princes in King Richard the Third that evening, and the rôle demanded, either that she should wear grown-up tights, which must bag and sag like skimpy breeches on her, or that she should paint her legs. Apparently her mother had decided on paint. Done well, she had assured them, Samuel said, no one could possibly notice it from the front. The measure seemed to James to be a terrible expedient, and brought home to him a sense of poverty and absurdity more vividly than anything else would have done.

As the interview went on his impression grew.

Samuel begged James to excuse him, and went on with the blackening operation while he talked. Presently someone came up the stairs and was heard to enter one of the other rooms. Phœbe and Samuel exchanged glances.

"Methinks I hear the footing of a man," she quoted in a totally unexpected voice, adding more naturally, "I said he would come. Mr. Paton always pays in the end."

Samuel looked at James under his lashes.

"In this world, my dear fellow," he said affectedly, "money has not quite the regular flow like light and air which you no doubt expect of it. Here it has a certain elusive quality; it comes and it goes. You may not believe me, but I find it a circumstance which adds considerably to the entertainment of life."

James took the information as an explanation and a warning, and the talk continued, Samuel and the girl exhibiting a verbal dexterity which took the visitor's breath away as the pair no doubt hoped it would. They were both showing off; Samuel earnestly, and Phœbe in a more casual, easy fashion. She had more brains than her half-brother, and was also stimulated perhaps by James's magnificent appearance. By this time he had grown into a most attractive looking person, vital and masculine, and sleek with health like a young animal in the spring.

Eventually the Thorpes overstepped themselves, as they were bound to in this mood. It occurred just after James had enquired after their mother's health. He could not get the little woman out of his mind. It was because she had spoken to him directly. She had said very little, of course, but she had said it as if she knew he was at least a real somebody. It was a trivial matter, but it was an example of Mrs. Thorpe's charm. To her everybody was somebody and not just an object heaving into her vision.

James was really anxious to know if she was well and not overtired or distressed. When he put the formal question he betrayed the sincerity, and was surprised to see Samuel laugh and glance up at his half-sister.

"Everyone is concerned for Mama," said Phœbe, as she turned her back to the light so that Samuel could see what he was doing. "It is her chief remarker, don't you think so, brother?"

"Undoubtedly." Samuel bent closer to his task, but James could see that he was blushing. Suddenly he straightened his back and continued in the tone he kept for his more consciously outrageous statements: "Indeed, we are evidences of that concern, are we not, Phœbe? The living results of overwhelming if somewhat thoughtless compassion."

She laughed. It was a spontaneous giggle of pure amusement, and James, who was by no means as green as they thought him, saw the full point of the bitter and scandalous little joke. Two natural children of different fathers living openly with their mother was an odd state of affairs even in that day and age.

James found it extraordinary. His own situation was honourable compared to theirs; it made him feel slightly condescending until he remembered Lucius, and, of course, Edwin Castor, and got his balance again.

He said with apparent artlessness: "Are there any more of you?"

Both young people turned and eyed him with struggling respect. Phœbe was the first to recover her self-possession.

"No," she said, "there's only the two of us. You must see us act. Are you coming to the play to-night? Samuel may be able to get you an order for the pit."

James thanked her, but said he would prefer to pay for his own seat. He had not meant to create an impression, although they were all at the age when that would seem to be the most important thing in life; but he happened to do so, and was not sorry to notice it.

They were both interested. Samuel had assumed that James's flight was something to do with money, and had been wasting a fellow feeling on him. The fact that he was in funds seemed to fascinate them; they said so frankly, and James who had been envying them for the fun they appeared to be having, was driven by curiosity into frankness himself.

"What would you do with money if you had it?" he enquired.

Phœbe stretched herself and flung her arms above her head. Although James was not considering her much at that time, he never forgot that pose of hers. It epitomized her to him and remained in his mind as the secret of her attraction for him, whereas of course it was nothing of the sort. James needed Phœbe for her brains and her sophistication, but he never saw that until it was far too late.

"If I had money," she said, bringing down her hand so that he could see the ring with the red glass in it, "if I had money, that would be a real ruby."

He looked at it, and it was on the tip of his tongue to say that something or other was above rubies, but he could not remember what it was, and so escaped priggishness.

He stayed as long as he decently could, and took his leave, promising to come to the theatre in the evening. Both the Thorpes were very insistent on this, and they made a great fuss of him, as if they had decided he was worth cultivating. Samuel accompanied him as far as the street.

"We shall meet again, shan't we?" he said wistfully as they parted.

"Of course," said James in astonishment. Yet as he went off down the road, keeping a wary eye open for anyone who looked as

though he might have something to do with Lucius, he felt slightly depressed by the whole incident, and found himself wishing that Samuel had turned out to be a different sort of person, even someone who had been too grand and too busy to have seen him.

It was typical of James that he realized why he felt like that. Samuel was his only friend of his own age, and it followed that if Samuel was so pleased and anxious for his company, then Samuel for all his talk was not so good as James. On thinking it over, it seemed to him that for Samuel's sake as well as his own he had jolly well better be something as soon as possible. It was the naïve Shulie in him walking hand in hand with old Galantry's intellectual honesty. Between them they had produced a rum, simple youth, very human and peculiarly strong.

## *Chapter Twelve*

James's new, unhappy feeling tended to increase as he sat in the theatre waiting for the play to begin. He had been idealizing Samuel for some time, and now after the sight of the dark, untidy room, the leg painting and the toiling bravura, the ideal was fading. It made him feel very lonely, for human ideals are companionable things like distant landmarks on a march; and once they are past the traveller has nothing to look forward to until the next tower rises in sight.

James was feeling this loneliness as he sat on the hard bench and sniffed the many odours of the playhouse. It was all much smaller and far more tawdry than he had expected. The notices about pickpockets were obviously necessary, and even the most attractive people round him looked silly and over-excited. Moreover, the lack of ventilation in the place almost stifled him. His childhood in the salt marshland had accustomed his lungs to large draughts of vital air, and now the little foetid stream, lukewarm and mildly poisonous, scarce kept them going. He had half a mind to wash his hands of the whole business and go back to 'The Golden Boar,' when the curtain rose.

A limping monster of a man, dressed in dusty black velvet and gold, came forward and said something which hit James squarely between the eyes.

"Now," said Richard of Gloucester, in a huge, rich, three times life size voice, "Now is the winter of our discontent."

James did not hear the end of the sentence, he was too astonished, for the words had said what he felt. They had expressed him. This was indeed the winter, the bare time, at which the only resurrection lies in new growth. The winter, yes, that was it; the winter of discontent. The words had snatched the feeling out of him and thrown it away in the air. It had been said, expressed, got rid of. He found the experience was astounding; it was like vomiting emotional poison.

After that his eyes did not move from the stage. The play was Cibber's version, of course, but even that consequential little hack could scarcely hurt it, nor could the woman who played Queen

Margaret and muffed her lines in the very midst of her envy. James did not recognize her as Mrs. Thorpe. He had scarcely heard of Shakespeare before, but now as one country boy to another, he tumbled to his tremendous secret immediately.

James saw at once that the people on the stage were saying, not so much what they thought as did people in real life, but also what they honestly felt. They were doing it, too, in the most economical way possible, and never seemed to be at a loss for a word. These were immortal folk who could bring up the last flavour of the passions in their hearts. To listen to them, James found, was to be reminded of every imprisoned emotional pain he had ever had, and to give himself the glorious experience of having them all liberated one after the other. It was something quite new to him, partly a game or an exercise, and partly a sort of cleansing process; and all the time, of course, there was the rhythm, the beautiful, steady music timed to the heartbeat running strongly as an accompaniment to the sense.

James's head began to sing and his mouth fell open a little.

Phœbe came on to say her few lines, and the paint on her legs made her look only a shabby little Prince. James did not recognize her. To him she was the character, and he did not want to think of her as anyone else.

The end of the play found him exalted and exhausted. He did not stay for the after-piece because he did not think he could bear any more. He blundered out into the dark, cobbled street and the soft air from the river came up to caress him, while the stars danced among the pointed roofs above.

James knew he had made one of the great discoveries of his life. He also knew that it was quite all right and there was no catch in it, like there was in getting drunk. This new asset was a genuine one. If he had not the power of self-expression, he had discovered appreciation, which was the next best thing. He forgave Samuel everything, unconditionally. Samuel was justified.

In that first exalted mood, James even forgave Phœbe her painted legs.

He was striding down the narrow entrance to the Butter Market when somebody sidled out of a doorway and came towards him. Presently he saw Whippy's great shining moon-face appearing out of the dusk. He was pretty well speechless with mysteriousness, and

James, who had been living in an earlier, more expansive age for the past few hours, very nearly kicked him off the footway, he was so annoyed with him.

It was a long time before he could get any sense out of him at all, but gradually he gathered that Lucius himself was in the town, staying at the 'White Horse,' and that his man had already made enquiries for James at 'The Golden Boar.' Whippy said that old Jed was most anxious to see James at once. At any time James was proud enough to resent being hunted down, but now in the first flush of his liberation he found it insufferable. He objected very much to the hole-and-corner way in which Whippy smuggled him into 'The Golden Boar.' They went into a neighbour's garden, climbed over a stable wall, crossed a crumbling parapet, and entered a window on the first floor. James disliked it all intensely, and by the time he was ushered into the kitchen he was very angry, and in the mood to say so.

Jed listened to his outburst in silence.

"No, no," he said at last, "no, no. Not that I don't like you for it, mind you. You don't want to goo down there and talk to he. He's your half-brother and he's a lawyer, and that's a wonderful strong kind of partnership. No, no. You be ruled by me. I've only come to the age I have by being wonderfully fly. I know his sort. Keep out of his way for half an hour and he'll get tired, and then he'll go off and mind his own business. Why should you be bothered by he? Now I'll tell you what I have in my mind." He was being very conciliatory, and Whippy, who never had this sort of treatment from his father, was overcome. James was irritated by his expression of dog-like reverence, and looked at him coldly. Old Jed followed his eyes, and was apparently exasperated, too, for he suddenly reached out to the side of the fireplace and, snatching up a blackthorn stick, lunged at his unfortunate youngest. Whippy fled. As the door closed behind him the old man chuckled bitterly.

"That wouldn't do for you," he said.

"No," said James, "it would not."

"That's right; that's right," said Jed, unperturbed. "Different cattle take different handling. You go down to your half-brother if you're so minded and let him wriggle round you. Who am I to stop you?"

He rocked the top part of him gently in his tight chair, and

closed his eyes. The stratagem was obvious to James, but he was not to be made contrary by it.

Presently he said with a prophecy of his future manner, "I think you're my friend, Mr. Fletcher, and I know he's not...."

"That he ain't," said Jed, opening an eye. "He's doing nothing but going about the country advertising you for a good-for-nought."

James grew red at the injury done him.

"What do you advise me?" he demanded.

Jed woke up at once. "Now you're being a sensible young gentleman," he said. "Remarkably sensible for one of your years, if you'll forgive me for being so personal. Now, just you listen to me."

He unfolded his plan with considerable energy, and reminded James strongly of his sister, Mrs. Jason. But whereas his excitability was liable to lead to mere well-meant confusion, Jed's had a great deal of sense within it. It appeared that his eldest son, Gustus, was on the eve of setting out on his annual visit to Appleby Horse Fair, far away in the north country. It was an enormous distance, hundreds of miles, and Whippy was going with him. They aimed to pick up ten or a dozen "young things" and to bring them back for quiet winter trading. They were going to travel light on "little old nags," would sleep where they could on the way, and in all proposed to be out of Ipswich for six or seven weeks. Mr. Fletcher's suggestion was that James should accompany them. Gustus was an old hand, his father said, and he preferred "to travel cross-country wise through little back lanes, like a proper gypso."

His eyes flickered as the unfortunate phrase escaped him, but James, who was quick to imitate anything he admired, did not appear to hear him.

He was attracted by the suggestion, he knew that he would enjoy the trip more than anything else in the world, for all his life he had heard of Appleby Horse Fair, where every gypsy, every coper, every dealer met to haggle, and thousands of pounds' worth of horseflesh changed hands every day.

He knew the journey was a wise expedient, too, for among the lanes Lucius would never find him; yet he felt very bitter about it. They were all pushing him back to Shulie, friend and foe alike. Chance herself conspired to lead him back to where she knew he belonged. Damn them for it, James thought.

He was still frowning when Jed spoke to him, answering his



mind.

“Don’t you worry, boy,” said the old man unexpectedly. “Blood’s blood. Rant and rage and die and clip, you can’t never alter it either way, so don’t worry. However, I can have a remarkable *bad* thoroughbred that I wouldn’t be pleased for anyone to see in my stable, and I can have a wonderfully *good* crossbred any man would be pleased to own. Good and bad, that’s what matters, and if any man tell you he don’t know the defference, he’s lying, or he’s not safe about by himself. Blood’s blood, but it’s only blood; it ain’t the whole boiling. I tell you one thing too,” he added, dancing about in his chair in excitement, “there’s a lot too much importance put on to blood, and why? Because that can’t be altered, see? Same as there’s a lot too much importance put on the size of a man and the face of a woman. Them as is fortunate keep up the idea because it’s them what benefits, and them as ain’t fortunate keep it up because they know it’s something they can’t have, whatever they do. So they think it must be wonderful, same as any little old child do. I’m a very thoughtful old man, and I’ve seen a powerful lot of men and a powerful lot of horses, and I’ll tell you about the blood horse, Mr. Galantry.

“A Blood is a horse what’s been bred for a certain purpose, and for that work, if he’s a good ’un there naturally ain’t nothing to touch him. A lot of picked-out horses have gone to make him up, but put him to other work very likely he ain’t so good as the next. He can’t help it, he’s bred so. But a good cross horse is a fine animal, a proper fit beast to live and die on the earth that’s made for him. Don’t go forgetting the king word, though. That’s ‘good.’ Be a good ’un and don’t go worrying about blood. Now forgive me talking so round about, and go you off to bed. Three in the morning you’ll be starting from here.”

This was one of the first of Jed’s many homilies, and James could not help but be influenced by them.

He went to Appleby and learned there even more about horses than he knew before. He enjoyed himself, and betrayed powers of bargaining which brought respectful admiration even from Gustus Fletcher, who considered himself pretty good.

Lucius never caught James, and, as Jed had predicted, soon gave up the chase and fell to minding his own affairs.

## *Chapter Thirteen*

James never knew exactly when he fell in love with Phoebe. At first she was just Samuel's half-sister, and then one of the three of them, and then one day he realized there was no woman in the world but she. That day came when he was nearly twenty-two and he could not welcome it. He put the thought of her out of his mind again and again, but there was no killing it, and one evening some time after the first revelation he stood alone in the dusk leaning over a gate some little way down the lonely road outside the town, thinking of her.

It was very cold, and there was a heavy ground mist, but he did not stir for nearly an hour. His life was becoming a burden to him. All through the winter it had been growing difficult enough, but now that the spring had come searching into his blood there was no escape for him anywhere. Now he was suffocating in the grip of a deadly preoccupation, and had been forced to go off along like this hugging his love to himself like something alive.

He had not told her yet, and for some time now had done his best to keep away from the theatre. But it was very difficult. He had a problem which he saw no way of solving; it lay in his own peculiar position and hers.

The last seven years had been the happiest in his life, and in them he had found a background to replace the one he had lost for ever when old Galantry died and left him with fifteen thousand pounds, Dorothy to love him, and nothing else in the world. His new background was a curious one in all conscience, but he valued it enormously, for it was all he had, and he was a man who all his life felt the need of one. His present difficulty lay in the attitude taken up by Jed, Dorothy, and the Jasons.

These, since they had connived at his escape, had in Chinese fashion ever afterwards considered him their own responsibility. They were the people who for the last seven and most impressionable years of his life had been helping to make James into the sort of person they thought he ought to be, and in this their hands were strengthened because their ideas coincided so nearly with James's own views on the subject.

Jed had done his honest best by James, and it was because he had been so very honest, and even idealistic about it, that he had never treated him as a son. Ever since James had first entered 'The Golden Boar,' Jed had treated him as his master's son, and in the England of those days that was a very different thing altogether.

The others had abetted Jed, and thus James had grown up to fill a very definite position in the little world surrounding him. He had become a sort of squireling in exile, an East Anglian Bonnie Prince Charlie in miniature.

His adherents were possessive; he was grateful to be possessed, and the feelings of responsibility, theirs to him and his to them, had grown enormous.

It was an odd state of affairs, but inevitable in the circumstances.

James's present difficulty lay in the simple fact that, considered as a wife for him, a woman who was both bastard and play-actress was not acceptable to any single one of the few people who were literally all the world to him. This in itself was unfortunate enough, but there was an even more awkward side to it. The true objection lay, not so much with Phœbe, as with himself. Jed and Dorothy objected to the alliance because in their opinion James's breeding could not afford it. There was no mere snobbery in the matter, they were far more practical than that. As far as they were concerned marriage was solely a means to an end, which is to say, to progeny, and that was their paramount consideration.

Jed had put it to James very plainly only a few days before.

"I hope you'll forgive me for being so personal," he had said, using the opening with a certain amount of justification for once in a while, "but you want to be wonderfully careful how you marry. Wedding will be a terrible serious thing for you. You don't never want to think about gooing along with one of they old players, y'know. Some gentlemen is forgive if they takes one of they, but some ain't. They're a pretty little old lot, but they're nothing more than gyppos. We don't think much to they, we don't."

He could hardly have put it more brutally, and now as James leaned over the gate in the darkness he knew there was no possible hope that he might have meant any less than he said. Worst of all, in his heart he could only agree with him. The real objection was little to do with Phœbe, the main weakness was his own. There had been one dangerous cross-breeding, and the risk must not be taken

again. His position which they had built up for him so carefully was at stake.

He thrust his hands in his pocket and wandered back along the road. He thought it was a seriously foolish matter in a seriously foolish world, and the only person in whom he could imagine confiding was Phœbe herself, or possibly Samuel, and that was hardly possible in the circumstances. He cursed himself for falling in love with Phœbe; it had cost him his two best friends. Yet as he walked along in the darkness he knew he was in love with her, and that despite the grim commonsense of his training and temperament, he would have her if she cost him the world.

There was one way out of all the difficulties, of course, but he did not feel inclined even to consider it, although Jed had put it to him fairly plainly. Phœbe was too good to be a mistress, too dear. He had made up his mind to marry her; it was the question he had come out to decide, and having settled it he walked on more quickly for he suspected it was getting very late.

He ought to have gone to the theatre instead of wandering out on to the road, for it was to have been a great night there. Phœbe was taking the first great part of her career, and he should have been present. Indeed, had it not been for her little note asking him to be sure and come, he might not have forced himself to take a decision so soon. But the prospect of seeing her again had made that imperative.

He had not been near the company for over a fortnight, but Whippy, who was the world's most industrious gossip, had kept him posted in all the details of the great occasion. It was to be "Romeo and Juliet," he had reported, for Mr. Webb, the London actor who was honouring Ipswich for one week only, had insisted on including Mercutio in his repertoire. This inconsiderate move had embarrassed the stock company considerably, since Mrs. Venture the proprietor's wife, who normally played all the more important of Shakespeare's women, was within an ace of being brought to bed with her second child, and while it was considered seemly and even piquant for her to portray Lady Macbeth when in such a condition, her appearance thus as Juliet was thought to be unsuitable. There had been a great many conferences, so Whippy said, and finally amid a great deal of excitement, Phœbe had been given her chance.

James felt guilty about avoiding the performance, but he was glad he had. He did not want to have to think of Phœbe and

tragedy in the same breath; he felt it incongruous. Phœbe was Beatrice, Rosalind, Kate Hardcastle, not Juliet.

As he came through the town he realized that he had missed the show altogether. Already most of the houses were dark and the streets almost empty. He went round to the back of the theatre and was just in time to catch Clover, the doorkeeper, who was locking up. The old man was deaf as an egg, but affable as usual. His first words were enlightening.

"She h'aint here," he said, "don't suppose you'll see her again. Disgraceful! Mr. Webb couldn't contain himself when he spoke to her. He's got a wonderful voice, even I could hear him meself. 'Madam,' he says, 'in London tragedy is tragedy; in Hipswich I see you prefer farce.' She soon went off after that and her Ma with her. The old lady was a-crying and she was a-laughing; quite a comedy it was."

James could get very little more out of him, but it seemed clear that Phœbe's début as a tragedy queen had not been an unqualified success. He stood at the end of the windy street hesitating for a moment or two before he turned to go up to the Butter Market. He had never become a part of the exciting, moonlit world of the theatre any more than he had ever really become a part of Jed's horsey fraternity. There as elsewhere he had always been but a half-brother. But he had seen a great deal of it and he could guess the kind of crisis which the present debacle would provoke.

James admired the Thorpes' sophistication and their lively fancies opened new vistas to him, but he had few illusions about either of them. They belonged, he knew, to a very shadowy universe; a place of high-lights and darkness, of great exultations and wild despairs. He thought he had better go and see Phœbe at once.

The bonnet shop was in darkness when he arrived, and he threw pebbles up at the first floor windows until Samuel put his head out. To James's surprise he seemed in very good spirits.

"Galantry," he cried, "my dear fellow. Just the man. Come in. Come in. Wait a moment and I'll open the door."

He was still chattering when James followed him up the stairs, and his voice, which was still very nearly as squeaky as when he had been a child, sounded positively elated. Yet as far as James could gather the great night on which so many hopes had been

builded had been something of a fiasco.

"Fantastic, my dear James," Samuel insisted earnestly, as they turned into the large, untidy sitting-room. "Sublimely ridiculous. Juliet the clown. Juliet getting her laughs every time. An entirely new conception. We impressed the Londoner."

James was not heartened by the information, he had seen Samuel in this mood before. He looked round anxiously for Phœbe, but there was no sign of her. He was about to enquire after her when she appeared.

The inner door, which led into the bedroom, was suddenly thrown open, and she stood on the threshold. It was a dramatic entrance for one in disgrace, but not a tragic one. She had hitched up her skirts to make a travesty of a doublet and trunk hose, and had twisted a black stocking round her head, so arranged that the toe flapped over her eyes not at all unlike the monstrous lock of which Mr. Webb was reputed to be so proud. Her arms were folded and her eyes peered at them from beneath the turban.

"Madam," she said, and immediately the London actor, complete with all his eccentricities, stood glowering before James. "Madam, in the Capital we reverrrre our trrrragedy."

It was a comic picture, for behind her there was a clear view of the bed in which Mrs. Thorpe sat upright in a mighty white night-cap. The lady held a steaming glass in one hand and a handkerchief in the other, and was protesting her shame at Phœbe's disgrace at the top of her voice. James began to laugh aloud and Samuel turned on him.

"That's nothing, my dear fellow," he said, "you should have seen her in the tomb."

At this there was a fresh outburst of wailing from Mrs. Thorpe, and Phœbe broke out laughing herself. Altogether it was a most hilarious gathering. James shut the bedroom door for their mother himself, and Mrs. Thorpe assured him in a stage whisper that she devoutly prayed that she should never see the morning light.

It all sounded very serious to James, but the brother and sister were still amused. They quoted passages from the play at each other, and James who knew them very well by this time realized that their chagrin must be considerable. It was not easy to discover what had happened at the performance, although they each gave him highly-coloured accounts. He took it they were exaggerating,

but gathered that Phoebe had obtained one unorthodox titter by mistake, had lost her head and had not been able to resist attempting to gather a few more. If this was so, it had been a very dangerous proceeding, for these were the days of belligerent playgoing and James himself had seen the seats torn up in the theatre several times. He enquired into this aspect, discreetly, and was reassured by Samuel.

"Oh, dear me no, James. Our faithful patrons appeared delighted. Hysterically delighted, perhaps, but not at all unfriendly. There were one or two cries of 'Shame,' a few demands for the return of cash, but no disturbance. Unfortunately our worthy proprietor and the London Thespian were not so easily beguiled. Our sister's muse is not the tragic kind, that has been proved."

"I enjoyed it at the time, you know," said Phoebe seriously.

"So much emerged, my chuck," Samuel agreed yawning. "Damme James, I'm tired. Do you sit up with the girl while I go to bed."

He got up from the couch as he spoke and wandered out of the room. In the doorway he paused. "It might have been worse," he said.

"Of course it might," she agreed, shaking back the stocking toe. "I might have actually poisoned myself. Good night."

When the door had closed behind him she let down her skirt and took off her turban. She was very tired, and the bright colour which had been burning in her cheeks all the evening began to fade. It was one of her times for looking beautiful, James thought. There were shadows in her face which accentuated her high cheek-bones, and drew in the tiny upward curving lines at the corners of her wide mouth. He sat watching her.

He was very still, and in his country clothes and high, white neck cloth looked comfortingly solid in a very flimsy world. Phoebe glanced at him, and for a moment her blue eyes met his bright, round, black ones. Very thoughtfully, her eyes still on his, she came over to him and, without rising or moving more than was absolutely necessary, he put out a hand to take her own. Presently he opened his knees and drew her slowly into his embrace, closing himself round her, pressing her against him, breathing deeply the fragrance of her skin.

He was so glad there was no talk, no explanation, no

preliminaries. He sat there, just holding her and felt like a thirsty man drinking great draughts of cool water. He had not realized how much he had wanted only that.

It was a long time before she moved, and then it was to put her arm round his neck. He could see her face within a foot of his own looking grave and eager, and far more like Juliet's than ever it had done on the stage.

"James," she said, "let's go away to-night."

"To-night?" he demanded, his heart leaping, as the way spread out clear.

"Why not? We've loved each other for a long time and haven't said so. Besides—besides, I don't want to see them all to-morrow morning, James."

He hesitated for a long time because it was not fair. She was very insistent.

"You've got the horses," she said. "Let's go now."

It was not fair to take her like this, it made things too simple. Besides, she was too dear.

"Oh, why not?" she repeated, drawing away from him. "Oh, why not? Don't you want me, James?"

He exerted a little of his strength and she cried out that he was killing her.

"Please, James," she said. "Please, James. We'll be so happy."

It was about two in the morning when James went into Jed's room to tell the old man that he was taking the gig and the blue roan. Jed squirmed up on his elbow and lay blinking in the soft glare of the candle James was holding high to light the room.

"Har! You've got her then," he said, although no word explicitly of Phoebe had ever passed between them.

"Yes," said James, adding after a pause, "we'll be back in about a month maybe."

"You ain't marrying of her?" There was both anxiety and belligerence in the old voice.

"No," said James, but he sighed over it. "No, I'm not wedding."

Jed lay down among the pillows again in peace.

"You want to look at that axle every fifty mile," he called after James, "and keep your eye open for a good little cob. You don't want to waste your time entirely."



## *Chapter Fourteen*

Nearly a year after Queen Victoria came to the throne, James rode down to Sedgeford village in Middlesex to see Dorothy, who was getting very old.

It was nearly fifteen years since he and Phoebe had driven out of Ipswich in Jed's best gig, and a great deal had happened to him and to the world about him in the interval, and yet he himself was not greatly changed. He had grown darker as he grew older, and had become even sturdier so that he now appeared an attractive, heavy, intensely masculine sort of a man who had blue whites to his round, black eyes, and colour under the dark skin of his face. He was reputed to have considerable charm and liveliness, but there was no frivolousness in his appearance.

At the moment he was riding a well-mannered, weight-carrying bay cob whose skin glowed like polished wood, and who gave indication of great care. Indeed, the pair of them looked much as they intended to look; good, reliable, comfortable, and not beholden to anybody. James's black hair curled on the top of his head under his low cut grey hat, and his sideburns were short and well barbered. His leather breeches were excellently cut, his boots highly polished, and his green coat with the big buttons at the back sat snugly over his huge shoulders. He rode very carefully so as not to tire the horse, and as he passed through Kingston he gave the animal a pint of the warm ale he drank himself.

When he neared the cottage to which he had moved Dorothy some years before, just after Jed died, he noticed the thatch needed patching, and that there was a pale or two missing in the garden fence. He was not irritated by the observations, but made a note of them as something else that must be attended to. He took his horse round to the stable, and was pleased to see the clean straw and feed set ready for him. Only when he was sure the beast was comfortable did he go in.

He found Dorothy waiting, as he knew she would be. She was very much better than he had feared, and he was surprised to find how tremendously relieved he was. She was sitting up in her chair by the window looking very clean and expectant. She was not so

very old, seventy-five is no great age in the East Country, but her years sat heavy on her, and had drawn the skin tight over her gaunt bones. The hair under her cap was sparse, and the hands folded in her lap looked like brown talons; yet her bright eyes were nearly as sharp as they had ever been, and they took James in eagerly as he came towards her.

She looked over him, he thought, as old Larch would have looked over a beast, eyeing it carefully for any sign of poverty or weakness. To-day she was pleased with what she saw. He was a credit to her, a great credit, a fine little old boy.

He laughed and took her hands.

“Going to bid for me, Dorothy?”

She grinned up at him, her toothless mouth giving her a babyish, helpless look.

“Har! You’ll do,” she said. “There’s a glass of wine for you over there. Set down, and let me hear of you!”

They talked of intimate trivialities; of the girl who “did” for Dorothy; of the state of the roof; and of James’s remarkably good health. They were both very happy. The July day drowsed outside and the sun gradually filled the little room and lit on the tiny chest of drawers, the gate-legged table, and the worn wool carpet which Dorothy had made herself long ago at Groats.

It was all very warm and still, and shabby and peaceful. James felt peculiarly at home; there were few places where he did get that feeling, but this was one of them. From here the picture of his life looked foreign and remote to him, like a novel. The tale of the past thirteen or fourteen years was apt to appear somewhat patchy and unreal, although if he examined it closely there was a pattern there, some sort of shape, a running line.

As far as his material fortunes were concerned, he had done remarkably well. His inheritance had increased, perhaps doubled, for his business ability had developed, and the lessons he had learned from Jed together with the close association he had kept up with the Jasons, had brought him considerable gains in his dealings in horse flesh. If Dorothy had taught him pride, Jed had shown him prudence, and under that strict hand he had learned to conserve his money. He kept very quiet about his horse dealings nowadays, considering them not quite respectable (as they were not), and had managed to convince even himself that he was the veriest amateur

in the trade, but his natural flair, his knowledge, and, above all, his caution, could not but be rewarded.

All the same, he had contrived to remain a gentleman who dabbled in horse flesh. He also bought and sold other things in the same unobtrusive, amateurish fashion. He had an eye for property. The cottage in which they sat at this moment had been a little speculation which had turned out well. The district was growing, the land worth five or six times what he had paid for it. Even his association with the theatre had not been unprofitable. His early attempts to act (he changed his name to Galley for the experiment) had soon convinced him that he had no talent in that direction; but that did not destroy his love for the stage. He remained an ardent supporter, and when the opportunity occurred, invested a considerable sum in the new Covent Garden Theatre, a speculation which paid him very well.

Yet for all his caution and gift for money making, if he did well he did not do too well. At every turn the self-imposed restriction against becoming an undisguised business man had hampered him, and kept him but moderately comfortable. It was an idiotic state of affairs, but in a transition period it is sometimes very difficult for a man to keep up with his own times, and James did not quite see all the changes taking place around him.

The new world, whose birth pangs old Galantry had so recklessly assumed to be death convulsions, was growing into a mighty youth.

The Industrial Revolution had so far produced wealth for many who had not had it before, and slavery for a great many more who had not had that either, and a bitter skin game was fast getting under way. At the same time, the Reform Bill had been passed, laying a corner-stone of the new democracy without the majority of folk realizing that once and for all the power of government had been wrested from the aristocracy, and that for the first time there was now no longer any real need to breed, or buy and fake one's way to power.

The French Wars were won, but not forgotten, and the loss of one great colony and the threatened loss of another had not passed unnoticed. The nation had had a great fright, and, much of the dead wood, both in ideas and personalities, had been swept away at least for the time being. The new nineteenth century son of the old rake of the eighteenth had buried his father and had set about keeping alive, and growing very strong, in every way possible.

The national mind plumping for safety and growth appears to have aimed with simple commonsense for wealth and progeny, relying on each to protect the other. The day of the damping-down and banking-up was at hand, and suppression, or rather, compression, with a view to making force was the order of the day.

Morals had tightened up in a way which would have startled old Galantry, and, because there was a purpose in this urge behind the change, public opinion kept them tight.

Women's clothes expressed the subtlety of this change perhaps more clearly than anything else. The natural mode, loose flowing and free, which made no pretences and few mysteries, had suddenly vanished, and in its place had come perhaps the most monstrously inviting and provoking costume of all time. Shoulders and bust appeared almost naked, and were allied to the drawn-in and helpless waist, and the peeping pantalette all promise and prudery; while, most important of all, the full skirt of maternity had returned. Marriage, the ideal state for child-rearing, became a vital institution again. Illegal alliances were abhorred as anti-social, and the virtues were extolled and made important.

It was a grim, forthright, reviving time, and since human nature does not necessarily keep up with the fashion, there was so much individual cheating that it became a commonplace, and most men were expected to have a few secrets and usually built up a little façade for themselves to hide behind.

As he sat there opposite Dorothy, his glass in his hand, and a soft, vulnerable expression in his round, dark eyes, the façade James had made for himself became very apparent. The old woman glanced across at him.

"How is she?" she enquired.

"Wonderfully well," he said briefly, and there was a long silence between them while Dorothy shaped her mouth to make words of which she always thought better just in time. Finally she came out with it.

"I don't like you mixed up with the wicked," she said. "Time was when I didn't believe in hell, but I do now! You'll be damned, my little old boy, the way you're going on!"

James smiled at her awkwardly. He was not surprised, for it was some years now since Dorothy had been "caught," as she said, by the Dissenters, and he was always having to lead the conversation

away from the conversion she had in mind for him.

"You still go to them places of destruction?" she enquired.

"I still go to the theatre sometimes."

"That poisons your mind, you know."

"I don't think so."

She closed her eyes, and he suspected she was putting up a prayer for him. Presently she smiled.

"I'm only a very silly, ignorant old woman," she said, and seemed to take comfort from the fact, as if there might be a loophole in her entire faith, and James be all right and not doomed to eternal burning after all.

He grinned at her. She smiled back, and for a moment they were outside the great, grinding social machine and safe together in an inside, eternal world. They talked again about ordinary things, and James watched the sun on the bricks outside the window, and admired the stonecrop sidling its way among them. It was a dear, happy little corner, very warming to the heart.

After a while Dorothy began again on difficult matters.

"I'd like to see you with a real lady-wife, and a son or two," she said, adding with the cruelty of her East Coast blood, "You don't want to leave that too late, you know. You ain't too young. Takes strength to get a child."

James said nothing, but he frowned as he looked out of the window, and she did not dare to press him further. Instead, she told him that Young Will was a grandfather three times over, that Lucius's second son was lately married, and that she had had word Jason's youngest had gone to America.

James was not interested, or he affected not to be, in the fortunes of his father's first family. Never since the night on which he left Groats had he had any communication with any one of them, but the gossip led him on to enquire of other matters.

"All well down the road?" he asked.

"So I hear. The gentleman lives very much to himself, the boy's still with him. He do look like his father as he rides by. He don't know me, of course."

They were talking of Edwin Castor, lately a Judge, and a man of considerable position and importance. For many years he had been living at Quinney's, the estate which dominated Sedgewick. Mrs. Castor had died in childbirth, and ever since then her husband had

devoted himself to his son and his work. James had never met him since that one tremendous occasion at Groats, and, indeed, had been most careful not to do so. But in the curious way that a simple nature will fasten on to a hero, he had never lost sight of him. As far as James was concerned, Castor remained an ideal; a symbol of earthly perfection, a sort of 'king human,' to be admired and emulated at a distance.

Had James not led such a strangely lonely inner life, such a childish proceeding would not have been possible, but he was a man with necessarily few intimates. The middle class society whose doors were open to him did not satisfy him, and the upper classes who demanded, if not birth, at least some remarkable social accomplishment, remained out of his reach. He did not admit, of course, that this was why he remained so interested in Castor; emotionally he had become less honest as he grew older, as do most people, and he put it down to chance that he should have found a cottage for Dorothy so near the estate of a man who had influenced him so much. This was arrant nonsense, of course. Not long after he had come to London, when Phoebe got her first chance to act there, he had ridden out to look at the country round about, and not entirely by accident had investigated Sedgford and observed the Castor estate from a discreet distance.

The empty cottage nearby had attracted him, and he had bought it. Then, not wishing to live in it himself, he could not yet resist having some part of himself there, and so Dorothy had been uprooted from the East Country. Thus James kept an eye on Castor, but never met him, and as he grew older and more sophisticated he became less and less inclined to do so lest he should be disappointed. It was an odd, human little story, only possible in a world in which the social compartments were very nearly watertight.

Dorothy went rambling on about young Castor. She said he was "wonderfully nice to look at and clever and sort of holy-looking." James let her chatter and remembered the two parents as he had seen them. They had been a glorious couple, he thought, a pair of Bloods, if ever there was one.

"She went," said Dorothy suddenly. "We never see her no more."

"Who?" said James.

"Your Ma," said Dorothy.

James blushed. It was a depressing fact that with the years Shulie had become more rather than less of a sore point with him, and on several occasions various young ladies, intending to be complimentary, had mortally offended him with an "Oh! Mr. Galantry. You look quite a gypsy, I declare!" or some equally innocent but unfortunate reference to his dark skin.

To modern ears this attitude of James's may easily sound insane, but in actual fact she had done him great injury. He was a good-looking dog without a collar, and there were moments in nearly every day when some little circumstance arose to remind him of the fact in this new, tight-laced world. Even with Dorothy it was not a subject he cared to discuss, and he changed the conversation immediately and enquired about the Timsons.

## Chapter Fifteen

Dorothy found little difference between gossip in Essex and gossip in Middlesex. In either county she could hold her own with anybody alive, and she had a great deal to say about the Timsons, who, as wealthy newcomers, were naturally the talk of the place.

James was interested because he had reason to be. He had met Alfred Timson in London at a gathering of *The Oratorical Friends* which was one of the semi-jocular, but jealously select debating clubs then so popular.

James was chairman of this particular group of convivial talkers, and had condescended to notice and befriend the gentle little new boy, Timson, who was so shy and so apologetic about having made a fortune out of the paint factory he owned.

One evening after listening to a flowery, if rather pointless argument on the motion "Social Questions are more Important than Political" during which James had distinguished himself by quoting the recent trial of the Glasgow cotton-spinners with great effect, Mr. Timson had been carried away entirely. After congratulating James warmly, he confessed to a little country place in Sedgewick and begged him to do him the honour of visiting him there.

James was attracted by the familiar place name, and said he would go, but he was sufficiently a man of his time to decide upon making a call first. At that time in his life he never took social chances. All through the period in which he lived, there sounded the savage note of class war. It was not the lazy murmur of other days, but the vigorous spiteful crack of the efforts of a great middle-class forcing itself on and up into supremacy with the busy ruthlessness of a forest fire.

Dorothy went on talking about the Timsons, and her view of them was the view of the countryside, trained in observations, and gifted with the often brutal clear-sightedness of people who go by the senses, by the heart rather than the head.

Dorothy said that Mr. Timson was thought to be a good, kind-hearted, not-much-strength-to-him sort of a man, but that *she* was quite a "different bag of meal." According to Dorothy, *she* came of better family than her husband and was "remarkable sour," because



she could not bring him and the children into “*her* yard” instead of “her staying in his as God intended.”

She also reported that they had not been called upon by the Castors and that in her opinion this had been a “wonderful blow to the lady.” She finished by saying that there was money there, and a great pew full of children on a Sunday, but that that was not of much account in these days, was it?

James allowed it to flicker through his mind that it really was astounding that he and Dorothy, who had lived together in such a simple world long ago, should now be talking of such complicated social distinctions with so much practice and interest, but the thought did not stay and he slipped back into the new world once again and took her remarks as seriously as the fashion demanded.

Dorothy continued to talk of Mrs. Timson.

“She’s a he-she,” she said, using the old local word. “Wonderful strong-minded. She’ll have her way if she gets more help from Satan than the Lord. I ’ouldn’t cross her, I ’ouldn’t!”

James kept this information in his mind, when about three in the afternoon he rode sedately down the road to pay his respects to Mr. Alfred Timson. He found a new, white brick house built with the fashionable semi-basement, although there was land and to spare, standing in a very decent little park newly planted with oak and beech.

A manservant conducted him into a hall whose chequered marble floor faded into the distance, and from which a staircase which had not quite the elegance of the great days which had inspired it rose up into mystery far above him. It was very elegant, and in spite of its size, slightly stuffy. An incredible number of pictures and mounted heads lined the walls, and the brilliant Turkey rug was quite three inches thick.

James thought it very charming and in most restrained taste. He also admired the drawing-room with the green silk damask curtains, which were stiff enough to stand alone; the ormolu; the clocks with the garden faces; the cast iron; the concert grand; the harp; the embroidery frames; the great baskets of flowers; the carpet with the multi-coloured pomegranates on it; the vast pictures and the tiny pictures; the marble and the gold. It all looked pretty good to James. He put it down as comfortable, wealthy, quiet, and oddly enough in one brought up at Groats, not at all overdone.

It transpired that his friend was out but that Ma'am was in, and would be graciously pleased to receive him. She kept him waiting only a little time and made her entrance through a little door at the far end of the room, pausing for an instant on the threshold in a way which told him she had either seen, or heard, a very detailed account of Miss O'Neill in comedy. She was not at all what he had expected, having prepared himself for one of the battleship matrons of the period. Instead he found an unusual-looking woman in the late thirties, very tall and thin, with a straight back and a square, wide face like a cat. She had wide mouth, too, and widely set cold, moonlight eyes edged with startlingly thick dark, black lashes, not very long.

She received him with quiet ease and revealed a much deeper voice than he had heard in a woman. James had charm for the opposite sex, and therefore knew a great deal about it. Mrs. Timson interested him enormously, but he did not like her; there was something reckless about her which made him uneasy at first.

At that time the rules for conversation at a first, formal call were laid down almost to the letter, so that the business of getting acquainted was made as simple as possible. James answered discreet enquiries, and put others. The whole point of the proceeding, which was intensely practical, as were all the social antics of the time, was for each party to find out without giving offence to the other, if there was any real reason why they should not associate. At the time it was an important matter, for admission to some houses could easily deny access to others. The little conference was quite as gruelling as any modern commercial encounter, and it went well enough. The wary phase passed, and Mrs. Timson relaxed a little.

She was evidently very disappointed that he did not live in the district, and was sufficiently unguarded to admit that they were newcomers and knew very few people round about as yet. Then, since James was sitting in front of her, very handsome and solid looking, with his round black eyes twinkling gallantly, she smoothed down the folds of her green silk dress and said: "Of course; that will come."

It was the queer way she said it that startled him, and he remembered what Dorothy had said about her being a "he-she." There was tremendous strength of purpose there.

"Of course," he said smoothly, and asked her if she found the

country dull. She glanced round the crowded room, so elegant and so unworn.

"Sometimes a little," she said very cautiously. "Of course, I have my children."

James gathered that there were five of them. Willie, the eldest, was already in London with his dear Papa; Elizabeth, the next, was just back from a finishing school; she was a dear child, but of course a great responsibility just now. A beautiful innocent child of sixteen *was* a responsibility, was she not?

James thought she might be, but he also thought it a very odd thing to say to a stranger. He asked what Miss Elizabeth found to do with herself alone in the country. Mrs. Timson lifted her square, cat's face to his and said that there was something so beautiful in the sweet purity of budding womanhood that one was sorely tempted to keep it unsullied as long as one possibly could. Soon dear Lizzie must have a ball, and come out, like other young ladies of her age. But just for a little while it was too tempting to keep her helping in the nursery with the younger children, practising her music and sewing with her beloved Mama.

James had heard this sort of talk before. It was growing more and more fashionable. Ruskin was about nineteen at the time and the ideas which he was to crystallize a few years later had already many devotees. James did not altogether like it, he had very much the countryman's view of life and the reproduction of it, and he did not believe in leaving the training of any young animal too late. Once or twice lately he had heard of young women, and boys too, brought up with such a rarefied outlook that some of the common animal functions were considered shocking by them. James, who had been brought up by Larch and Jason, regarded such a fashion with deep misgiving, although he could not deny that from his own purely masculine point of view there was something physically exciting in the idea of a virgin so virginal that even her mind was unopened.

He was acute in this sort of matter though, and he saw the underlying motive of the mode, one he was sure which was never admitted or even guessed by the ladies who embraced it. It did not altogether shock him; like most people interested in the breeding of animals, he was inured to such shifts and had no belief in the polite fiction of the inexhaustible virility of any male, but he did not like it, hoped it was not necessary, and thought, too, that if the older

ladies were not very careful there might easily be a lot of trouble arising out of it.

He was human enough to want to see the young paragon, and he said so, half laughing, adding that he supposed such innocence was kept safely under lock and key.

Mrs. Timson's reply startled him. She professed herself horrified at this suggestion, which she affected to take literally, and assured him that she had such complete faith in the inviolable qualities of little Lizzie's sweetness that she never imposed any of the foolish restraints upon her to which she saw other mothers subject their unfortunate offspring. In her opinion, she said, any such move might give the child ideas which could be almost indelicate.

James listened to her and wondered why she was so vehement. He sincerely hoped she was lying. The topic was a trifle heavy for a first call and he steered the conversation into easier channels.

Some minutes later when he was leaving and the manservant was again conducting him across the marble chessboard, he saw something which reminded him of the conversation. Just before he reached the threshold a girl came hurrying in. She was about sixteen, he judged, but tall and well developed for her age. He guessed who she was, for she was startlingly like her father and had the same short nose and ingenuous blue eyes. She was hatless and breathless, and her hair, which was silken with much brushing, was slightly disarranged. Her muslin skirts were dimpled round the hems with the little sweethearts which grow on the jack-by-the-hedge, and her round, white collar was crumpled.

James observed all these things casually, but her expression held his attention. There is a certain look, which in very young people is apt to be nothing short of transfiguring; it is an expression of intoxication, of unconcealable, inexpressible, overpacked happiness. There was blood in Miss Lizzie's face, a shine in her eyes, and an unhidden smile on her mouth.

James, who was not given to poetic thought, fancied that if flowers had sprung up between the marble blocks underneath her feet it would hardly have been astonishing.

She ignored him and quite possibly did not see him, but ran on past him and up the stairs. The two men, James and the servant, had seen her though, and James, looking sharply at the other, intercepted the same wary glance from him.

James rode off thinking of Mrs. Timson and wondering if she could be as much of a fool as she appeared, and too, idly, who it was Miss Lizzie had been meeting among the jack-by-the-hedge.

## *Chapter Sixteen*

Miss Lizzie lay in her bed (which was small, and wore muslin flounces to hide its legs), and pulled the sheet up over her shoulders because she was not undressed. She was in great distress. Sin is a truly awful thing if one is honestly not used to it, and she was all but suffocated by fear of the uncontrollable urge which had sprung up in her to deceive Mama (who was now no longer Dear Mama but one of the Enemy) and go into the garden as she had promised Frank Castor. Her red and white room was as fussy and cluttered as a work-basket, but to-night its windows were wide open to a very different world.

The air was warm and scented, and the garden was alive with whispers and a sort of breathy sighing she never remembered hearing before. The moonlight was very palely gold and had the magic property of making lovely things like trees lovelier, and commonplace things like wheelbarrows and potting sheds invisible. It was an hour of enchantment.

At that moment she only meant to go out into the garden, really only that, only out in the garden. At the time Miss Lizzie was two people, two distinct girls; one of them, the more familiar Lizzie, was in a state of panic, terrified by the warning instincts which chattered inside her like voices just too far off to be heard. But the other Lizzie was astonishingly confident, entirely happy and possessed of alarming ingenuity in devising practical methods to attain her end. This new Lizzie was a frightening girl. She had a whole stream of logic to back her up, too, and had a way of suddenly producing fine arguments to which the yammering instincts of the good, everyday Lizzie could bring only vague, unsatisfactory replies. This had been shown very clearly in the battle they had just had over the Bible reading.

When Lizzie had come in from her walk this afternoon her usual bout of silent day-dreaming had not satisfied her, and she had felt the need of liberating words to free her of some of the shattering excitement which was torturing her so unmercifully. Having no one in the world to whom she could talk she had tried to read, and it had been then that the new dominant Lizzie had decided on a certain passage, while the old Lizzie had protested feebly. To this

objection the other Lizzie had taken up the Bible and let her finger run over the word "Holy" embossed in gold on the crimson morocco. So until the light failed, the two of them struggling in one little girl had sat and read the beautiful Eastern wedding idyll. Miss Lizzie read the verses just under her breath.

*"My beloved is mine and I am his:  
He feedeth his flock among the lilies  
Until the day be cool and the shadows flee away,  
Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or young hart  
Upon the mountains of Bether.*

*By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth,  
I sought, but I found him not."*

Beautiful, kind words to one in great pain. There was one recurring phrase which rather frightened her, it came so often and was like a spell or a chant in a fairy tale:

*"I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and the hinds of the field that you stir not up nor awaken love until it please."*

Miss Lizzie did not want it to say what she thought it might, and so she put it out of her mind and went on with the interchange of the main love song.

As she had sat by her window catching the last dregs of the light on the tiny print, she looked like a picture from a Christmas Supplement, her hair was so smooth, her snood was in place, and the folds of her blue dress hung softly to the floor as she bent over the Book, yet no roe or hart on the mountains of Bether ever lifted his head with more eagerness than she did to look out of the window at the green leaves as she heard for the first time the dreadful calling music of the insistent earth.

The normal Miss Lizzie Timson, who until three weeks ago had lived and suffered and been happy in a child's way for over sixteen years, was a very good, if very ingenuous and affectionate little girl. She was not quite ordinary, however. She had her father's gentle interest in the next human being, and had added to it a trick of her own, by which she was able to identify herself with almost anyone who might be near her. This was more than sympathy; it was a

power to link up with, to suffer as, to enjoy for, to love in fact, practically anybody. It is a comparatively rare attribute, and since what it actually amounts to in sober fact is the gift for pooling human emotional force, it is the secret of man and highly dangerous if the rest of the human mechanism surrounding it is not ready for it.

Lizzie's ignorance of the ordinary reproductive machinery of the animal world was very nearly complete. Early and continuous assurances that certain matters were "not quite nice subjects for a young lady," had convinced her that there was virtue in not knowing a great many things, and with some effort she had succeeded in making herself blind to much.

Meanwhile everyone who met her loved her in the end, if only because she loved him. She never demanded anything from them, and was neither jealous or possessive; moreover, her affection was diffused, and thus never ugly or importunate. Always with her it was a giving and not a taking. Now she was grown and as artificially ignorant as if she had been reared in a padded bandbox; a very vulnerable, very dangerous young person.

To-night as she pressed her head into the pillow and pulled the coverlet closer round her shoulders, she was trembling with the agony of the passion which was burning in her. She was a strong, healthy young thing for all her slenderness. Moreover, she was very feminine, very normal, and for six weeks now she had met Frank Castor nearly every day.

Their acquaintance had progressed from deliciously exciting beginnings, through the miseries of doubt, and the delights of certainty to the crisis of a declaration. Since then there had been worry in it. New problems had arisen; new responsibilities; new urgencies. For ten days now he had been pleading with her to meet him in the garden at night where they could talk and kiss alone quietly without the constant fear of being overlooked. It seemed to them they wanted so little from the world, only that they should be left alone just for an hour, just for a breathing space.

To-day Lizzie had consented, and now she was two-fifths afraid while the rest of her was a bundle of breathless anxiety for Mama to come in and get her good-night kiss over and done with.

At last far down the corridor Mama's door opened. The candle Mrs. Timson carried shed a thin stick of light under the door at first,



and then as she came softly in, her dressing gown of gophered linen whispering over the shining boards, it made a wide, sharp shaft like the blade of a scimitar.

Mama was hardly thinking of Lizzie, and certainly not of her as a human being, and she said the things she always said in these days.

“My darling not yet asleep? Surely the windows are too wide? Mama would not like Elizabeth to take cold!”

Lizzie begged for them to be left open, and as usual Mrs. Timson was acquiescent. She sat on the end of the bed, her square face lit by the candle-light, and began to question gently. Where had Lizzie gone for her walk? To the mill? That was a pretty walk. As she came back through the water meadows had she met anybody? Only young Mr. Castor? Oh, with his tutor? Oh, *not* with his tutor? Had they spoken? Just for a moment no doubt? What a good-looking boy he was, wasn't he? So reserved and shy, and yet so distinguished! Mama had heard his poor Papa was unwell. Perhaps when he grew better he would call upon Lizzie's dear Papa, and they could all be friends. That would be nice, wouldn't it? Perhaps when Lizzie went out to-morrow she had better wear her grey merino with the wine braid. It was very becoming, and more formal than her muslin. Mama liked her little girl to be a credit to her, although Lizzie must never be vain. Vanity was not becoming in a woman. Gentlemen like her dear Papa did not like vain girls. A very charming gentleman called on Mama to-day—a Mr. James Galantry. It was an odd name, wasn't it? Mama fancied she had heard of the Galantrys somewhere, they were some connection of Lord Driffield's. Mr. Galantry was a very good-looking person, extraordinarily dark, though. Had Lizzie seen him? He was riding a very nice horse.

Lizzie, who was well nigh fainting with guilt and its weariness, said she had seen him, and wasn't he very old?

This made Mama laugh. She said Mr. Galantry was a comparatively young man, younger than Mama, but not so young, of course, as Frank Castor. Frank Castor was really remarkably fair, wasn't he? Well, little Lizzie must go to sleep now, and have a nice walk to-morrow!

It was criminal of course, cruel to the point of insanity, but to do Mrs. Timson justice, she had no idea of it. She herself had been brought up very strictly but not in complete ignorance, and it

simply had not occurred to her that the added grace in the marriage market which she had so carefully bestowed upon her daughter might easily have altered the entire make-up of the product. Had her own mother indulged in little day dreams before her, she would even at sixteen have followed the elder woman's plan of campaign. The notion that Lizzie did not do so merely struck her as pleasant.

Very happy in her own wisdom, she kissed Lizzie and trailed away to her own room. As soon as the last flicker of the candle-light slid away from under the door, Lizzie sprang out of bed and began to straighten her hair in a misery of haste. The Enemy had kept her too long. Perhaps Frank had thought she was not coming, and had gone home in despair. This very practical worry swept away any nattering of conscience, and she was free of it until she was safely in the garden.

It was warm out of doors, and the turf deadened her footsteps. The avenue of small hollies and cedars, which would one day make two stuffy walls, was now broad and spacious. The hollyhocks and standard roses nodded between, and the shivering of the poplars made a noise like the sea a long way off.

Lizzie walked unsteadily across the grass, and at last reached the new plaster temple which his architect had persuaded Mr. Timson was a necessity in any well-appointed garden. Once there she clung to one of its smooth pillars and struggled to get her breath, which would not come properly because of the thunderous beating of her heart.

She had no mind left; nothing to think with at all. She was a quivering, disorganized, purely emotional machine. Tremendous forces, unlike anything it had ever before encountered, battled amid it. At one moment her body was racked with physical pain and the next was alive with pleasure, and all the while the "child in charge," the owner of this paralysing phenomena, sat wide-eyed and silent among it.

The boy came out of the little temple clumsily and almost fell in her arms. They were both aware of their awkwardness, and both brushed it aside as negligible. His first kiss missed her mouth altogether, and hurt the thin bone of her chin, but the next was more successful, and they clung together like drowning things, wretched, in desperate need and terribly afraid.

Frank Castor was just seventeen. He was like his father, but had

most of his mother's discontent in his face, which was otherwise at this age beautiful and fair-skinned as a woman's. He was quite as much in love as Lizzie and because of his sex very much more reckless. In stealing out at such an hour he was running a greater risk even than she was. He had been driven to more desperate shifts, and now that she was actually with him, his physical unease was greater.

When they could speak, they walked up and down the little upper lawn which was hidden by the trees, and kept very close to each other, since parting was an agony.

Their conversation was terrifying. They gabbled wearily through matters which in the normal way would have been interesting to both. There were details of Lizzie's descent over the porch roof to be mentioned, and the important fact that Frank's tutor, who actually slept in the room leading out of his own, was still drunk.

"They," their parents, the Enemy, were scarcely mentioned.

The matter which absorbed the two was the mighty phenomenon itself.

The boy was better educated than the girl, but he, too, had led something of the life of carefully fostered innocence which was coming into fashion. However, whereas she had only the Bible and certain carefully selected contemporary authors for information, he had had the Classics, but even so he was astounded. In all the books, in all the teachings, there had been no indication that love was like this. Agony and exultation are only words until the heart has spoken them, and no mind in the world can discover alone what the harts and the roes on the hillside know without any minds at all.

The two went on whispering under the leaves, and presently the fatal words were said, as they are always said sooner or later, by the very young indeed.

"Perhaps we are different." The phrase slipped in as it was bound to, and the ancient towers of fantasy rose up on the insane, too-human surmise.

After a little while they gave up talking. They were still desperately shy of one another, still in terror lest either should inadvertently offend; still appalled by the unexpected behaviour of their own bodies. Lizzie was fighting against a frightening weariness, and an overwhelming impulse to sit down; her waisted

stays hurt her, and her legs ached, they were so heavy. Frank, on the other hand, felt himself possessed of superhuman strength, and a vast bounding energy which would not let him rest.

They stood for a moment under one of the beeches which rose intensely black against the moon, A single shaft of the enchanted light sliding through the leaves fell on Lizzie's face. Frank felt his heart move in him, so that he knew exactly where in his chest it hid. He thought her more beautiful than anything ever in the world. The discovery filled him with a sort of holy rapture, and he dropped on his knees in front of her, hiding his face against her hard little waist.

The argument which convinced them both, as it has convinced millions of very young people ever since God started making them, was that nothing which produced such a passionate desire to be kind could possibly be wrong.

After a while Lizzie bent over him and he, raising his head, found that her bodice was undone.

Very tenderly, very sweetly, and with his ears burning for shame, he kissed her breast. It was an innocent crisis, a moment of satiety.

Later, when they parted, he hugged her close to him protectingly and childishly. He would have liked to carry her in in triumph, and have rung all the bells and summoned all the lights. A rage against the Enemy, and the great compressing harness of civilized society, seized him.

"To-morrow," he said fiercely. "You'll come again to-morrow?"

"Every to-morrow," she said, unaware of futility. "Always. I love you."

## *Chapter Seventeen*

It was on the day after James had bought his new house, and before he had even thought of telling her about it, that Phœbe told him of the proposal of marriage from the elderly Sir Robin Carver. The old man had been ogling her from his box all through the autumn season. James had seen him.

Secretly James was rather full of the house. It was not the first he had bought by any means, for he liked to acquire property, and always put his money into it when he could; but this was the first purchase he had ever thought of living in himself. It was in Penton Place, off the Walworth Road, then in its youth and a highly select thoroughfare. It was not very big, eight or nine rooms at the most, but very elegant with double doors to throw the two parlours into one. It had two little gardens; a paved one in front with figures and dwarf shrubs, and a long one at the back, containing a pear tree, a mulberry tree, and a syringa with a seat round it.

James had felt the pride of personal ownership when he mounted the stairs, and had suddenly imagined the wall was covered with red velvet paper, and had seen long sweeping curtains of bright red plush, with cords and tassels and great pelmets against expensive cream paint.

The picture had suggested manageable elegance to his mind, and it had attracted him enormously.

Now Phœbe had produced her news and stood watching him. They were in the big upstairs sitting-room of her lodgings in Drury Lane, in the house next door to the doctor's shop. The room had a certain lazy grace, and was far older than the house in Penton Place. The window where they stood was big, and although it bulged out across the narrow road until one could almost lean out and shake hands with the bookbinder working in his shop opposite, yet there was plenty of yellow London light in the room, and the noise and the colour of the Lane ran along always, just below, like a pageant.

Although James and Phœbe had been lovers for fifteen years, living always near if not actually with each other, yet anywhere that she was still filled him with that mixture of exultation,

curiosity and surprise which is romance.

By this time she had grown into a very distinctive-looking woman, at times breathtakingly beautiful, at times positively ugly, but always, in any situation, and at any given moment, a personality. The years had put more drawing into her face and every muscle could obey her and shape itself anew to tell something she might care to say. She was a comedy actress, polished and acute, and worth every halfpenny of the munificent eight pounds a week which Mr. Macready had somewhat grudgingly agreed to pay her.

She was a little darker now than she had been as a child; her hair was a deeper straw, and was now brushed sleek like a satin hood, while her gold silk dress which matched it sat jauntily on her tall figure, and flounced out from the drawn-in waist in a cascade of nonsensical frills. Even now, even when he knew her so well that she was a part of him, James always felt young and clumsy when he was with Phoebe. It was one of the chief reasons why he loved her, and the reason that he never quite admitted to himself.

The fact that he did love her was confronting him now like an abyss opening at his feet, filling him with fear, actual physical fear; a dropping of the heart and a wave of blood passing over his face.

She was standing in one of her typical attitudes, a pose straight out of a Knowles comedy; one hand was on her hip and one slipper rested on a footstool, while she smiled down at him seated before her. She was looking at him under her lashes, but he knew her eyes, which were like blue stars, were not really laughing.

"I think I shall, James," she said softly. "I think I shall, you know." She was goading him into enquiry and he hung back as long as he could. Finally he gave way.

"For God's sake, why?"

"Because I want to be married."

It was absurd to pretend surprise, heaven knew it was old ground. They had gone over it again and again, and he had known always that the crisis must come in time. Here it was.

He sat staring moodily in front of him. His great shoulders were hunched under his very dark green coat; his fancy waistcoat with the staggering embroidery was rumpled and his square head with the mat of black curls on it, lolled forward on his chest. He looked merely sulky, but it was not so. Inwardly he was despairing, a man

cringing before the tyranny of his own obstinacy.

Phœbe let her eyes rest upon him, but there was no telling from her expression what she was thinking. Presently she moved closer to him, and he took her hand as she had known he would, drawing her down on to his knee so that she lay with her forehead tucked under his chin. He said nothing, but there was an aggressive possessiveness in the way he held her, and his arms closed round her with the irritable forcefulness of a man taking his own and be damned to everybody.

She put her hand round his neck and felt the line where the short hair grew.

“James,” she said, “I could have children.”

She felt the exasperated breath imprisoned for a moment in the barrel of the chest beneath her, and presently she tried again, whispering into his neck.

“James, is it that? Don’t you want my children? Well then, why have any? After all, considering...?”

He put his hand over her mouth and held it there, but she wriggled free of him and got up and went across the room, looking her enchanting best. Her flounces rustled as she walked, and she moved with that typical swagger which was one of her greatest charms on the stage.

“You’re right, my love. You’re right. If we yearn for respectability we must conceive it apart. Together it seems somehow to escape us, doesn’t it?”

He looked up at the note in her voice and saw her posing in the doorway, her arms extended and her eyes raised upwards. It was a very slight burlesque of one of the plaster nymphs in the new theatre. Last time he had seen her do it for himself alone, she had been correctly clad for the part with a silk scarf attached to her skin at salient points with spirit gum.

He laughed in spite of himself, and afterwards frowned at her angrily for it.

She went out then, and, he thought, she does not care. She never did. She is not capable of caring. And yet all the time he was only trying to convince himself of something which he did not want to be true.

James knew quite well, and always had known, that he would not marry Phœbe; would not, could not, should not, would not.

Definitely, obstinately; against fate, inclination, desire itself; would not, never.

At that period the theory that love and marriage had very much to do with one another was not wholly in vogue. When it did come again it began as a polite fiction, another stone in the edifice of productive marriage which the middle-classes were building up to make themselves strong. Very few young people of the middle-classes at that time married for love, and very few realized they had not done so because they were expected to pretend that they had. James belonged to this period and was at a loss in it for, of course, he had no class of his own by rights, and there were times when he longed for the solid advantages of a definite background with a family and friends of the family to make a garden for him to walk about in. Had he been a man who by temperament rejected these things, he would have had no problem; but with the years he had grown very much a man of his time. He had become a true early Victorian, a great believer in solid living, in breeding, in property, in respectability, in keeping up appearances, and in assuming virtue if one had it not.

Although among the stage folk, the wits, the country people, the the horse-dealing fraternity, and the hearty brethren of *The Oratorical Friends* he was at home and popular, they did not satisfy him. Always he was aware of the others, the great mass of the wealthier middle-classes, the people to whom old Galantry's first family belonged, and who were now fast coming into power.

James could not bear to be left behind.

He looked at the door through which Phœbe had vanished and thought, as he had thought long ago, that he was not strong enough in himself to marry her. Had he been sure of himself he would have done it and risked it, and bred and hoped for the best; but as it was, no. He knew quite well what kind of life they would lead together, and it would be delightful, slightly irresponsible, and certainly happy. He wanted it so much that his eyes smarted and an unbearable tightness grew in his chest, but he could not take it. It was simply that he could not. He was of his time and of his kind, and if he was to be himself he had no choice but to take the path which lay before him.

Shulie was strong in him, but not strong enough. It was as if she stood alone on one side of the fence, and on the other stood old Galantry, Galantry's elder sons, Dorothy, Edwin Castor, Mr. Philby,



Jed, Jason, Larch, and one or two more who had given James little or much.

Samuel was there too; not the young Samuel who might have been at Shulie's side, but the latter day Samuel, married to a rich woman twice his age who kept him like an ageing puppy on a little, silk lead. He was on the greater side as well.

Between them all sat James himself; of them, composed of them, fashioned from them, and with only his little half-worked soul his own.

Phœbe had put her finger on the vital point. It was the children; the survivors in whom all this gang, of which James was the temporary part custodian, was interested. By far the greater half of them clamoured against Phœbe. "If it were not for *her*, James," they said, pointing at Shulie, "then you might. But she'll always be there, and she's enough. If you give her an ally, James, she'll swamp us."

This conversation was not clear to him, of course. There was nothing fanciful about him in these days. He was not a man to encourage inward voices at all, but they were there in him and their little shoutings made a single note of warning.

He sat where he was in the familiar chair which by this time was his own chair by right of custom, and faced the real tragedy of his life without recognizing it.

Phœbe was going out of his world and he knew he was not going to lift a finger to stop her. He was going to let love go, that was all. Now in middle age it seemed a little thing. But it was rather more than that for Phœbe was not his opposite, she was his complement, and always she had restored his balance. If he was careful she was prodigal; if he was cautious she was impulsive; if he was too solemn she was too gay. With her he was a completed man, but not, unfortunately, an early Victorian middle-class gentleman.

He got up and looked down into the Lane. No, it would not do.

The outstanding thing about real tragedy is that it is wrong; there is no life in it; it is loss. James found no green shoot in his anywhere.

It occurred to him to go after Phœbe into the bedroom, at least to kiss her good-bye. Shulie advised it earnestly, but all the rest of the many ingredients which made up James urged him to go quickly, to leave at once, on impulse; to take his hat and stick and be gone. If it was to be ended, and the end had been coming for a long time, it

was better that it should come like this, almost casually.

He went out very quietly and did not hesitate outside her door or on the stair. He was very ashamed.

Leaning back against the bedroom wall, her shoulder against the panelling and one cheek pressed against it also, Phœbe heard him walking steadily away.

She did not move, but lay there crying until she had to laugh a little at herself. Then she sat down before the mirror and bathed her face, and put her throat against the air and prepared herself to go on in her own way with all the independence and the sophistication which was in her. But in her heart she knew, just as James knew, that it was a wrong thing, for James had a kindness, a solidarity and a common-sense on which her gaiety could do its little dance.

She married Sir Robin as she had said she would, and the old man carried her off to Bedfordshire to startle and mystify the natives. There he dried up the pure fount of gaiety with which he had been so fascinated.

James lived riotously and in an unusual fashion for him for three weeks after she left London. Then he settled down into dignified gloom.

It was in this mood that Mr. Timson found him when the horrified and unhappy man came to James as a possible saviour in his desperation. He brought an astonishing proposition.

To Mr. Timson's amazement and relief, James accepted the proposal after he had heard the full story, and agreed to marry little Miss Lizzie without delay.

Those who knew anything about the tale at all, and they were surprisingly few all things considered, attributed many disreputable motives to James's unexpected behaviour. Some thought he must have done it for money, and some were certain he could only have done it for pique. But the real reason was far more extraordinary, and only comprehensible to those who knew James and knew his background, and knew just exactly what it had meant to him when his father's first family made it so clear that he did not belong to them.

James married Miss Lizzie to get possessive hands on Edwin Castor's grandchild, and he would not have done it for any other reason on earth.

Just before he married, he told Whippy that he felt like having a

Blood in his stable, and Whippy thought it a peculiar remark, for at that time he had no thoroughbred nor did there seem, just then, any prospect of getting one. He said as much to James, and James laughed rather bitterly.

## *Chapter Eighteen*

Never go back, they say, particularly never in telling a story. Yet since it is important to explain what James was really getting and not what he thought he was, it is necessary to record something of the two things which happened just before Mr. Timson made his desperate proposal. One of these is what Edwin Castor said to Mr. Timson, and the other is what he said to his son.

Until now the real Edwin Castor has not appeared in this story. Hitherto he has been represented by the effigy of himself to which James set up his altar, and has appeared only as one of the princes in whom James put his trust.

However, he did exist; a sad, cold man, who suffered secretly with a dyspepsia which his dignity would not permit him to own. He was ambitious, and he was genuinely superior in mind to most of the people about him. He was intolerant of fools and unreasonably irritated by the minor weaknesses of less perfect men. This irritation was born of a genuine mistake, a genuine ignorance of a part of life of whose existence he had no inkling. He was a cold man by nature, and had no conception of the force of the emotions possessed by warmer temperaments. He could reason his own heart out of any inclination it had ever achieved, and sincerely thought that it was laziness or naughtiness which prevented anyone else on earth from doing the same thing.

Moreover, nor did he ever dream that in priding himself on this strength of mind he might be admitting to a weakness elsewhere. It did not occur to him that it is all very well to take pride in a chain which can restrain a dog, but that the size of the dog should be taken into account. Never in Edwin Castor's life had his unwilling footsteps dragged him into a situation which he knew to be unwise.

The mindless power of desire was not in him, and he had no clear notion of the reality of its existence. Unfortunately he thought he knew practically everything. He had a fine legal brain and his experience at the Bar had taught him many facts about human frailty.

In all physical matters he was unusually fastidious and was faintly proud of himself for being slightly offended by the normal

functions of the body. Vice amazed him, and it was vulgarity which made him most ashamed of the world. The older he had grown the more ashamed of it he became, and he kept himself and his own aloof with the care of a woman in an evening gown walking across a farmyard. This was nothing to do with snobbery, and not, as James assumed, a practical interest in breeding.

Castor was not interested in breeding, the mysteries of heredity had no fascination for him. It was not his subject. It was merely that he felt himself intellectually aloof. Necessarily he was a lonely man. It was true he had certain friends, men of his own age and eminence, but when he met them the clash of temperaments was apt to confuse the gentle interchange of brain and brain, and so most of his association with them was conducted by letter, and the Edwin Castor *Correspondence*, in three volumes, is a literary curiosity to-day.

His married life had been short and slightly unreal. His wife had always seemed to him to be a potentially disturbing person who was staying on a visit, and although he was startled by her early death, in his secret heart he knew it for a relief. Constant meeting, talking, sleeping with her had forced her too far into his life. She had come within an ace of blundering into his very self, and that was an intrusion to which he could not have submitted.

Frank was his only child, and in Frank he saw his own survival which was as near as he came to loving. Even so, he did not identify himself with the boy truly; he saw him rather as the "next person in charge," and for that did his best to prepare him.

Edwin Castor was nearly fifty and was set and old in everything but mind long before his time when Mr. Timson called upon him one evening late in the year. Mr. Timson was in a considerable state, he was fresh in his misery and was spurred on by his wife, who had a hysterical eagerness in her manner which he did not understand at all.

Edwin Castor received him with that devastating politeness which sets the recipient instantly at a disadvantage. He put everything but himself at his visitor's disposal, and then waited, not without mild curiosity, to see what he should do next.

Alfred Timson was a simple, unaffected man, far too capable of being hurt. His passage to success had contained so much agony that when he arrived at it, it simply comforted and did not

overwhelm him. At this moment he was utterly vulnerable and was a wretched, ashamed and smarting soul nakedly in tears. To Castor who had not anything like the same capacity for feeling, and was subconsciously aware of his lack, he was repellent before he even spoke.

Mr. Timson produced the sad little story without art. He was sorry for Castor, sorry for Youth, sorry for Folly, sorry for his girl, sorry for Castor's boy, and fully aware of much of the desperation and hunger which had led to the sin. He saw it as a sin and a disaster, as sins are. He did not see the ignorance, for of all things that are difficult to understand, ignorance is the most elusive. It is not easy to imagine nothing. However, he possessed the insight of pity, and before he realized what he was doing he was interceding for the boy, who had broken into his garden and stolen and despoiled his daughter.

He was that sort of man in that sort of trouble. His tale was passionate, incoherent and utterly convincing; even Castor did not doubt for a moment that the story was true, and that, even although he only heard the facts and brushed aside the evidences of the other man's misery as some sort of weakness.

The intimation came as a tremendous shock to him, but it did not overbalance him as it had Timson. Ugly stories were a commonplace in his work, and in his time he had heard worse. Emotionally he was shaken, naturally, but that side of him was not a very highly developed or adult affair. Therefore so far as the actual interview was concerned he was at a considerable advantage.

They were in a big room which was cool only in colour and which smelled pleasantly of paper and the leather bindings of books. Castor was standing on the hearth-rug, and was framed in a mass of carved wood overmantel, and by the fine painting of a soldier in red and white behind his head. He made an impressive and judicial figure, while Timson, fidgeting before him, made no figure at all.

Castor made no attempt to impress, he merely brought out his mind and put it on the matter as if he were setting up a microscope. To Mr. Timson he appeared disconcertingly calm and remote.

When Castor was ready he began to take the other man through the story very carefully, exactly as if he were a client of his barrister days.

"Tell me, Mr. Timson, what makes you so certain that my son is the culprit in this abominable and degrading affair?"

Mr. Timson was only too anxious to explain, and to get the tragedy into the head of this other father who, beneath his calm, must be suffering even as he was. He went off at a great rate, stammering over his story and repeating himself.

"Well, you see, it was the gardener, my dear sir, the gardener. A good, honest fellow, wonderfully astute. And discreet, too, I think, thank God! He noticed, or thought he noticed, that the garden was being entered from the fields at night, and that the temple—that's a summer-house, you know: stucco, ornamental, silly little place, romantic looking. Well, he thought, I mean he guessed, he saw in fact, certain things which made him think it was being used, and so he lay in wait and watched. You know how these country fellows do. I mean, they begin to feel the place is their own property—and so it is in a way almost—and he thought he was doing his duty I suppose, and then—then he saw the two children.... They're only children, my dear sir, only two silly children.... Oh my God ...!"

Mr. Timson had to break off to blow his nose, and Castor considered him with contempt from behind his barrier of ignorance.

"Your gardener identifies my son?" he said, picking out the important fact. "Was the boy there on only one occasion?"

"Well, no; no, unfortunately." Mr. Timson had got hold of himself again. "Webb says he did not like to come to me at first, and he seems sincerely upset, poor fellow. They are all, all the servants, very fond of my little Lizzie. She's such a simple, friendly little thing, poor silly girl. No, no; he waited several days, weeks I'm afraid, seeing them meet every night, and then he came to me and her mother, and I put it to Lizzie and we—we found out."

"Her condition," said Castor, without making it a question.

Mr. Timson's misery was embarrassing and even disgusting to him; it bothered him more even than the tale itself. He found himself disliking the man intensely. However, he was a disciplined person and went on steadily with the interrogation.

"Tell me," he said carefully, "this man Webb, your gardener. Did he see no one else but my son?"

"No one else but Lizzie," said Timson simply. "They were alone, you see."

"So I gather. But so far as you and your gardener know your

daughter had no other nocturnal visitors?"

Mr. Timson was one of those people who are so constructed that a really monstrous suggestion sounds literally incredible to them. It is as though they cannot believe that they have actually heard it. He looked at Castor blankly, his mind refusing to make sense of the words.

"No," he said, "no." He was quite convincing and Castor had not spent his working life in a court of law without being able to recognize the word that will be believed.

"Quite," he said. "Now, how did these young people become acquainted?"

Mr. Timson did not quite know. It appeared that he had not thought about it. The fact that they had met and with such appalling consequences seemed to him to be sufficient. But Castor was not nearly so easily satisfied. With unhurried persistence he drew out every shred of the story from the bewildered and heartbroken man.

Miss Lizzie had met Master Frank on her walks. On her *walks*? Was she alone on these occasions? Apparently she was. Was not that very extraordinary? Mr. Timson did not think so. He imagined she would be perfectly all right. Indeed, he had never dreamed of anything else. She was a child. A little girl. Hair down her back. A child. They were both children.

Castor was politely incredulous at first, and after, when he was convinced, shocked. He went on questioning.

Had Miss Lizzie never mentioned meeting a young man on her walks? Surely she had said something? Surely the girl's mother had her confidence? Or was it that she was a deceitful child?

Faced with the direct question Mr. Timson blinked. From far back in the year the recollection of a conversation he had had with his wife did come creeping up to him. He fancied it had taken place at night, in bed perhaps. Yes, surely his wife had said something about Lizzie speaking of the Castor boy, and had added that he was noble or handsome, or was it delicate-looking? Yes, that was right; there had been something. He could not remember much about it, it had not made any very clear impression. Sleep must have intervened. Yet now with these fine cold eyes looking deeply into his own, a shadow of some such talk did recur.

"She may have done," he said helplessly, "not to me, of course.



Her mother may recollect her saying something. But it doesn't matter, does it? It doesn't matter *now*. Nothing matters now. The thing has happened; she's going to have a baby."

He was so guileless, so transparent that his doubt showed through the words like a stain, and for the first time during the interview Castor's face betrayed something definite.

He smiled. To him, unhampered by most of the colours and shadows of the emotional picture, the hard drawing of the facts was vivid, and as it happened, slightly wrong.

He could see it all quite distinctly. First there were the scheming climbers, the father and mother. Then there was the pretty, possibly vicious little girl, and then there was the boy, ignorant and impressionable. He had a clear vision of a little fly in petticoats dangling seductively before a foolish young carp. It was quite evident to him and utterly evil and petty; an incident typical of a world made filthy by the stupidity, the greed, and desire for self-aggrandisement of ninety-nine per cent, of the creatures who lived in it.

Alfred Timson was still quivering visibly, and a surge of hatred for this stupid little social struggler who had attempted to blackmail him so crudely swept over Castor, and so shook him that he could barely trust himself to speak. When he was perfectly sure of his voice he asked Mr. Timson to leave. The man stared at him; he looked dumbfounded, and Castor's fury rose. Now that he was convinced Timson was attempting to deceive him, his normal perception was impaired; he could see duplicity in everything. He made himself very clear, and Mr. Timson, who was not mentally defective, came struggling out of his pain to face something more shocking than he had dreamed could exist.

Castor, a judge and a gentleman, a man of reputed honour and integrity, was revealing himself a scoundrel. The sentimental, unconquerably innocent little man was appalled. He had come in kindness, in sympathy, in Christian forgiveness, and he had assumed he was dealing with a man and a father, a person like himself, but probably better. Instead, he found a cheap lawyer. He said so.

His dismay gave him words, and Edwin Castor, who expected abuse from a frustrated swindler, was grimly amused. However, he saw himself as the winner, as one who had seen an ambush and

avoided it. For the life of him he could not resist the final thrust.

“You have your remedy,” he said, “you can sue.”

Mr. Timson got up with more dignity than he had betrayed throughout the interview. There were red and white patches on his face, but his eyes were contemptuous. The two stood looking at each other, and each man was drawn away in loathing, each shrank in disgust, each hated. Neither of them realized for an instant how ridiculous he was, inasmuch as it was done. Already the dance of the years had begun another turn in its inescapable pattern. Already they were bound. Already they two were mingled in living blood. Already beneath Miss Lizzie’s heart there beat another heart in which the two of them were intermixed, shuffled, tangled inextricably together and for ever in a partnership nothing could ever untie.

Before that absurdity their hatred belittled them and made them idiotic. Yet secure in the little circles of their downward eyes they did not see it even as a fleeting light.

## Chapter Nineteen

Later on that same night, when Frank's tutor was on his way to London, with his ears still tingling, Edwin Castor talked to his son.

The two were peculiarly alike as they sat looking at one another. Frank was in bed, sitting up clasping his knees, and his father leant back in the chair by the fire. It had been a long and difficult conversation, but one carried on with surprisingly little passion once the first outburst had died away. The boy was white, and his eyes were dark saucers, while Castor himself was more unaffected and sincere than he had ever been in his life.

"You see," he said, emphasizing the point he had made before, "there is nothing to it but that. It would be a folly out of all reason to spoil your life for it. There is nothing to it but that, nothing whatever."

The boy opened his mouth to speak, swallowed, and put his head down. "It is difficult to believe that, sir," he said at last.

"Is it?" Castor was staring at him fiercely. "Is it? Do you honestly find it difficult to believe that now?"

It was an unfair question. There had been dreadful moments for Frank during the hours he had spent with Lizzie; moments of hair-raising embarrassment and erratic revulsion, moments when he had hated himself, but never her. At the time while the incense of enchantment was still burning, these moments had been snatched up quickly and bundled away into the back of his mind like dirty linen in a cupboard. But now at Castor's command they came tumbling out again, twice as hideous in the clearer light.

There was another thing, too.

This was something more difficult, more awful, somehow; to the instincts more wrong. Now that he knew Lizzie so thoroughly, now that her mystery was explained, she was just as dear, if not dearer, but not so overwhelming, not so muddling to the mind, not so 'above all the world' important. This was true. At his father's command it had to be faced. *There is nothing to it but that. It would be a folly out of all reason to spoil your life for it.*

Frank's life spread out before him into the haze of the future like an inviting valley. Always its promise had been held out to him as

something fair. There were glimpsed, triumphal avenues in it, happy mysteries. At one time (in Mr. Timson's stucco temple, for instance) it had seemed well lost for one touch of Lizzie in the dark, but to-night, when the bright light of unstimulated life and Castor's cold intelligence were brought to illumine that moment, it looked a time of delusion, of madness, or drunkenness.

Castor went on talking about the Timsons. Now that he had won he was tolerant again, and in an unenlightened fashion, kind.

They were all right, he said, probably even good little people in their way. Only anxious to do something extra fine for their child. One must be intelligent, he said. One must try to see their motive. They had wealth already but little position. This was an attempt to acquire one. They wanted to attach themselves to an established family. It was natural and human enough, but in these circumstances, ridiculous.

He could not talk about the girl, he said cautiously, but didn't Frank think that perhaps ...?

Frank must forgive him if he were wrong, but didn't Frank think that perhaps it was possible that she knew as much about the matter, the—ah—the attempt to ensnare as anyone else.

Castor silenced the boy's protest and hurried on.

It was only a suggestion of course, he said, but Frank must see that in these matters a young man was extraordinarily helpless. The physical passion, the animal's naturally overwhelming desire to reproduce his species—one must put a thing like this plainly—was very strong, especially in youth. Given the opportunity, the entire body conspired to make what was in cold reason a bestial and degrading act, palatable—possible. With women—girls—it was quite different.

Frank was still sitting with his head bowed, but he heard, and the lie filtered slowly into him. One vision alone remained unpolluted, and he looked up, shy and wretched.

"She didn't know," he said huskily. "Honestly, father, she didn't know. I ... I taught her. Honestly she didn't know."

"Then the blame lies with the parents," said Castor, as if he were on the Bench, "and with you."

Frank began to cry. He wept helplessly, like a baby, and Castor revolted at his weakness. A vicious outburst from him pulled the boy together effectively, and he sat up stiffly, his face wet but his

eyes angry.

Castor was relieved, and said so.

“Look here, my boy,” he continued, speaking with a spitefulness which clipped the words, “you have made a fool of yourself, and if the girl really was innocent, as you say, and as I still doubt, then you’ve made worse of yourself. That is a serious thing. But it is not enough to break you unless you let it. Life is a desperate business, and to get through it, and to conquer it, and to make something of it, you must take all sorts of thrashings. Some of them will be trivial, and some of them will be like this, deeply injurious. Don’t deceive yourself that you have not lost something valuable; you have. You have done an evil thing, and you are weakened by that. But you have not been smashed by it. You have not been trapped into a disastrous marriage, and, since these people have some pretensions and aspirations, they will not care to sue, and you will escape a public scandal.

“But neither of these things is to your credit. It is purely fortuitous that you will avoid the material consequences of your act. The other, the moral consequence, you cannot avoid. For the rest of your life you will remember this wickedness, and remember that it was yours. That is the penalty for a stupid, ignorant act of undisciplined ugliness. It will torment you, and that I think is just. I do not think that what you have done merits any less or any more.”

He rose, and dropping his judicial manner as swiftly as he had taken it up, said wearily: “Life is full of this sort of thing. Much of it is very confusing and extraordinary; I do not see the reasoning in it, but I am convinced there must be some, you know. There must be. There must be a Mind engineering it all for some great reasonable purpose. Otherwise it’s all meaningless. Good night, my son.”

He went out and the boy sat alone in the dark and faced his father’s world. Had it not been for one thing he might have rejected it and seen the gaping sophistry in it. But that thing was integral in him; he was Castor’s son. Many of Castor’s ingredients were in him also. Therefore Castor’s interpretation sounded to his mind horribly likely. All except the bit about Lizzie.

He could not think of Lizzie without his throat contracting, and a great weight descending about his eyes, while a wave of thirsty loneliness swept over him. So, since he knew now that these were but symptoms of a dreadful mental illness—a thing common

enough and natural, but not a right condition—he tried very hard not to think of her.

It was the explanation of the Phenomenon which sounded so appallingly convincing to Frank. His father's explanation sounded so feasible when he remembered the inadequacy most of the descriptions of it in the great tales (he had not read them with his new eyes, of course), and the note of warning and regret which appeared in the majority of them.

It began to occur to him very slowly and coldly that Castor was right. The discovery appalled him. It was such a very shocking thing, such a curiously filthy, beastly trick, such a spiteful pitfall set just at the beginning of life to catch and hurt the innocent. There was a sadistic quality in the idea. It was a sort of lovely cruelty. It made him frankly blasphemous. Any creator who could design such an artifice, even for the useful purpose of carrying on a species, was not a loving god. The terrible notion that the Almighty might not be kind crept into his mind and sat there freezing him. After all, it was possible, if this other thing was. How could one tell? Being thus once so utterly, so cruelly deceived; having found out once that all the finest in one, all the sweetness, all the gentleness, all the self-sacrifice could be transmuted unawares into an enticement to savagery, then how could one be certain of any other solid glory? For all Frank could tell the world might be in the hands of a Moloch.

But meanwhile, and all the time too, like distant fire music behind his thinking, there was Lizzie's tragedy. Where was she? What were they doing to her? What would happen to her? Somewhere now, at this very moment, in this very darkness, the crease where her arm shut down beside her breast must be just as deep and shadowed as ever it had been. Where was she? Oh God, cruel but omnipotent, where was she? Who would comfort her?

The pain rose in a crescendo and then there were the degrading symptoms again; signs of madness, of vulgar illness; signs of the weakness and helpless rottenness of man.

He laid himself down very wearily, hid his face in the cold linen, and wished quite sincerely that he was dead, and, for Lizzie's sake, that he had never lived.

Later on, when he grew older, as he developed in the cool, intellectual atmosphere of his home, he altered some of the more

childish theories he formed that night, but he never escaped all of them.

The sentence which his father had pronounced on him with so much thought and so little imagination was duly served. He never did forget what he had done, and the knowledge did torment him, but also he never had another child.

When he married somewhat reluctantly, at thirty-five, with that object in view, his wife found him no lover. He died a sad, lady-like old man, with very strict views and a quite innocent habit of preferring young male society.

When Edwin Castor left Frank that night he went along to his own room, feeling heavy and dissatisfied. He was convinced that he had done his best for his son in an abominable situation. He had seen that he did not escape punishment altogether, and had yet averted for him the entirely disproportionate doom of a life handicapped at the very outset by a union with an entirely unsuitable girl. He did not see what else he could have done, and felt sure that in the recesses of His great mind, his Maker would agree with him.

But all the same, he was very wretched about the whole business and his hatred for the Timsons flared up again, doing its confusing and disorganizing damage within him.

So the Castors got nothing from the incident, and lost much. For them it was all loss, all decay, all potential rottenness. James got more out of it, both good and bad, but Lizzie, strangely, got much good out of it in the end, or so it would appear from her story.

To almost any other temperament her betrayal must certainly have been a ruining experience. Lizzie had been deceived, even more cruelly than had Frank. She had been abominably and stupidly misused, bitterly misled, deserted, and punished out of all reason. But Lizzie had loved, completely, honestly and without reservation; without any mortal thing set on one side or put by in case.

This was the touchstone and the saving grace. For it would seem that the remarkable thing about utter generosity is that there is unwanted, but inescapable gain in its giving. Perhaps this is because there is growth in it, for had she given less of her heart while making the same sacrifice of her body, there could surely have been nothing but horror in it for her. But as it was she gave everything,

and was, in the giving, comforted. So while Frank was trying to shoulder unforgivable sin, Lizzie was taking the first stages of her punishment.

She was locked in a shuttered room, and in three days had been given nothing but bread and water, then a fashionable correction for far slighter crimes than hers. She was hungry and exhausted from crying and was far more clear-headed than usual in consequence. The stunning incredulity had passed, but so also had much of her sense of guilt. She was still sweatingly afraid, of course, very much alive to what had already happened, and to something of what must inevitably happen thereafter.

There had been a storm of terrible discoveries, about life; about physical facts until now too trivial and vulgar to be glimpsed and yet at the moment so terrifyingly important; about Frank's helplessness, who had seemed stronger than the world; about the loneliness of the deserted; and about the cruelty and impotence of the older half of mankind when it suddenly becomes afraid.

All these revelations were flying round her head like a scattered pack of cards. They were too much for her, there were too many of them. In the midst of the whirlwind of negation she seized on the one green bough, the one thing which was alive and constructive, and it saved her.

Along with the bread and the water she had been given the Bible, of course, but by this time the Lizzie who had planned so fiercely and adventured so recklessly was a mass of weeping misery and no longer in charge. This time the normal Lizzie chose her own reading and went to St. Paul. He had the truth for her in strange words, which once their need is felt are probably the sanest, most enlightening in the world. Charity—not the mewing posture of patronage disguised, but charity herself, true spirit who alone can make another's weaknesses one's own and give to him a self's consideration, thus to reduce the cruelties of life to the little understandable shifts of a still young mankind.

"Charity suffereth long and is kind," explained the saint to Lizzie; "Charity beareth *all* things, believeth *all* things, hopeth *all* things, endureth *all* things. Charity never faileth."

Lizzie took the instructions and the promise as literally as if he had given them to her personally from his cell. Go on loving, she translated it; bear it, believe in the God in people, in Frank too;



hope, hope hard; always, obstinately; unconquerably; foolishly if necessary; endure. Together these never fail; God promises.

So she of them all who suffered most, received most, as it happened.

## *Chapter Twenty*

The sensible thing to do is not always the pretty thing. No one can deny that what the Timsons and James did about Lizzie's disaster was highly sensible, but in many ways it was an ugly thing, and if in the end it was she who gained she certainly suffered very dreadfully first.

They conducted the whole affair from beginning to end as if nobody knew what had happened; nobody at all, not even those most closely concerned. It was a tremendous feat of self-possession, a masterpiece of looking a thing in the face and not seeing it. James played his part perfectly, as did everybody else.

He arrived at Dorothy's cottage one day in a new two-wheeler with a smart little chestnut between the slender shafts. After staying the night to rest the mare he got up early to put all in order, and later in the morning, dressed superbly in a new red-brown coat and the latest in grey hard hats, he drove down the road, the spokes of his yellow wheels winking like bayonets in the sun.

He took luncheon with Mr. and Mrs. Timson and a pale and terrified Lizzie newly decked out in a grey silk gown. After the meal he helped her into her jacket, saw the ribbons of her bonnet tied under her chin, and lifted her into the trap himself. When they were tucked in together with the thick rug smoothed neatly across their knees, he gave the chestnut her pretty head and they went off together, the cob's tiny feet throwing up a splatter of gravel from the wet drive.

They trotted through the village and turned down the winding road which led through the water meadows. The jack-by-the-hedge was sere and rotting in the rain-soaked grass, the river was swollen and forlorn, and the willows, looking like petrified skeletons, raised spiky fingers to the sky.

Lizzie looked at them all and her hands hurt each other under cover of her muff, but she gave no sign of distress save that her face grew a little more pallid in its silk frame.

James, who did whatever he did deliberately, glanced at her stiff back approvingly and took her on to the next jump.

They passed the entrance to Quinney's at a walk, and saw

through the naked trees the red blinds drawn at the windows. James looked at Lizzie again, but still her small shoulders showed no signs of drooping. Presently they passed Dorothy's cottage, and she peered at them from the window. When James took off his hat, Lizzie bowed, and the feather in her bonnet nodded in the wind.

James grew more satisfied. So far they had barely spoken, and he stirred himself to do something about it. He asked her if she was cold, and she said not at all, but that she found the freshness of the air very agreeable. She turned her head to speak, but did not raise her eyes and there could hardly have been any counterfeit in the colour which swept over her face.

He began to question her about her music of which he had heard so much from Mrs. Timson. Was it true, he enquired, that at school she had once played the piano before the Queen? Lizzie agreed it was so. It had been a great ordeal and she had made her curtsy with the other girls. Had the Queen noticed her particularly? No, there were many older and better performers than she, but it had pleased Mama.

James nodded approvingly, and was silent for a while. Manners excellent; self-possession good; modest; not forward, but also not awkward. Obedient? He did not know yet. There were one or two other points which had better be examined. To do him justice he was being very sensible. He was certainly behaving as if he were buying a horse, but why not? He was proposing to live in much closer proximity to this young woman than he would expect to have to with any horse. He meant to have her if it was feasible, but there were certain faults which he knew to be irradicable, and he had no intention of taking on the impossible.

He was still considering her when he pulled up at the trough outside the "Red Lion" inn, and while the chestnut sucked daintily at the water a beggar came sidling up to them, his greasy hat held up imploringly. He made for the girl, and she sat blushing, her hands fast in her muff.

"Aren't you going to give him anything?" said James with interest.

"I can't," she said, "I haven't any money."

James unbuttoned his coat and produced a large knitted purse with strings, which he untied. He took out a sixpence and gave it to her.

"Throw it to him," he said. But she took the money carefully, beckoned the man to come closer, and slipped the coin into his hand with a smile which was apologetic rather than condescending. It was very prettily done; James was taken with it.

He did his best to get her to talk on their way home, but provoked only formal answers. He could feel the fear in her just as he would have felt it in an animal. It came to him through the elbow with which she touched him sometimes when the trap jolted.

When they came back to the house, he drew up in the drive where the trees hung over the path, and sat silent for a moment looking at her. She was not much like the girl he had seen on his first visit as she had come dashing in through the hall doorway, her face alight with happiness. He rather wished he had not remembered that. Suddenly he laughed, with an impulse that was all old Galantry, and she, looking up at him, saw a fierce, dark face on which there was self-derision and yet enormous animal good humour.

"Kiss me, Jinny," he said, "and I'll marry you."

Lizzie closed her eyes and lifted her face to him meekly. Her nose felt like a little piece of ice on his cheek. It was only when he was lifting her out at the steps that she ventured to correct him.

"My name is Lizzie, Mr. Galantry," she said.

"Elizabeth Jane, isn't it?" said James. "I like the 'Jane' best. Little Jane is Jinny. Do you mind?"

"No," she said, "of course not. But nobody else calls me 'Jinny.'"

"That is what I thought," said James, and he looked at her very steadily. She grew white and he offered her his arm to conduct her up to the door. It was all so utilitarian, so realistic, so cruel for the present, so sensible for the future.

## *Chapter Twenty-one*

When James drove back alone to Dorothy's cottage he was in one of his own peculiar moods. He was being himself and was obstinately clinging to the fate which being the man he had decided to be entailed. He had plenty of misgivings, however, for he was not a fool. They buzzed round his head like flies, but he was not turned back. He had made up his mind. His marriage to Lizzie was going to happen in the same sort of way that his marriage to Phœbe had not been going to happen. He still had free will, of course; even now he could escape a whole set of experiences which he knew would not all be pleasant, but he knew he would not change his mind.

Lizzie had passed the little test his prudence had set her; there was not much against her that he could see, and for a reason which he would not analyse he wanted the child. Everything else, therefore, every natural rebellion, he put out of his sight.

The following day, as soon as he arrived in London, he went round to Penton Place. He devoted his entire energies to the preparation of the house. Not only was Lizzie never consulted, but hardly even remembered save as an object around whom the stage was to be set. James did not think of Phœbe either; when she did come into his mind he put her out again. Yet a great part of her was there with him all the time.

It was Phœbe's sophisticated taste which James took with him when he went to see the upholsterer, Phœbe's gaiety which insisted on the wallpaper with the blue birds on it for the bedroom, and Phœbe's sense of fashion which advised the silk sashes for the plush curtains in the yellow drawing-room. And all this, although she had never seen or heard of the house, and was suffocating deep in the country.

Just for a moment it occurred to James that the stuff of humanity was soluble in love, and it dawned upon him that there was never any real escaping from anybody one had ever loved, or even liked deeply. Bits of them clung, he thought, although the individual was for ever striving to conserve and keep himself unadulterated. To be loved, thought James, is ephemeral gain, but to love is to acquire something permanent. It was a rather terrible idea to an

individualist, and James put it away from him.

After a while he was happily convinced that he was preparing his own house, quite alone, and without help from anybody. It was soon ready, and one day well before Christmas, James took the key in his hand and walked over his castle. It was very new, very cosy, and completely deserted, for the servants were engaged but not yet on the scene.

Bessie Fletcher had found him a pair of country sisters who had been well trained 'at the house of a gentleman near Ipswich,' and Whippy was bringing them up himself at the end of the week.

James had thought a great deal about keeping a man, but had decided to postpone this mark of gentility until later, until he was quite sure how much everything was going to cost him.

At the moment, therefore, he was quite alone, and he went steadily through the house from hall to attic. He found it very satisfying. The crimson curtains, which had been so astoundingly expensive—twenty-five pounds a pair—gave the two parlours on the ground floor a note of ease and elegance which reminded him of Groats. The drawing-room above was satisfying also; the yellow flowers on the brown carpet were soft and rich looking; and the rosewood chairs, the striped silk sofa, and the piano which was a present to Lizzie from her father, all possessed an air of distinction. Behind this room was his own little sanctum, which possessed a small balcony outside its window; it had a grape vine on it which pleased James out of all reason. He did not go in there just then though, but continued to the top of the house, where there were six bedrooms; one large one, with the blue birds on the walls, and five small ones.

He went into the one that was to be the nursery and looked out of the window. He found he could see right across his own piece of land and over the high wall at the end to the Surrey Gardens beyond. He had not been actively aware of this popular playground before, but now there was movement there. The winter preparations for next year's fairs were being made, and among the waggons he saw a painted caravan or two. He was tremendously interested at first, and for a while watched them with genuine pleasure until suddenly he became very angry indeed, and wished he had not bought the house at all. It was a purely emotional reaction, of course, and when he brought old Galantry's mind to bear on it, he became amused at himself. The noise would not be

very great at this distance, and the fireworks would entertain the women, and later, no doubt, the children. But it was certainly odd he had not noticed the place before.

He went downstairs, feeling vaguely surprised. It was queer, just chance of course, but queer how there was never any real escape. Always there was a reminder. Life, he felt, was like driving an obstinate horse.

He turned his big shoulders and gave his attention to serious matters, like the quality of the paint, and the fact that in one corner of the landing the paper-hanger had patched badly. Once on the drawing-room floor again, he went into the room which so far he had avoided. It contained his own things: certain pieces of favourite furniture had been sent down from his lodgings and now stood round the wall smugly, as if they knew they were in a permanent home. James was very glad to see them, they belonged to an earlier and plainer period, and were quite different from anything else in the house.

Everything that could be locked was so: every cupboard, every desk, every drawer, had its key.

James sat down in an old saddle-bag chair and pulled open the top drawer of a tallboy, which let down, and made a small, uncomfortable accounts desk. Inside were half a dozen pigeon holes, flanked on either side by a nest of small drawers with white bone handles. He took out the third one on the left hand side, and reaching back behind it produced another and smaller still, which some thoughtful cabinet-maker had introduced for very private papers. This drawer contained his account book, half a dozen I.O.U.'s, and a snuff box with a very flowery inscription on it, a gift from Phoebe, which he had thought it prudent to give up using. There were some old letters from her, too, and one comparatively new one, which had never been answered.

He put these aside and made up his accounts very carefully. But afterwards, just before he put everything back, he took up the note on the unfaded paper and looked at the scribbled line again.

*James, O James.* That was all. He sat bent over the desk looking at it. Had it not been for that unexpected glimpse of the fair-ground preparations he might have wavered badly even then. But that glimpse was the straw which brought the scales down on the sober side.

The little house which delighted him so, the solidarity, the respectability, were all also a little confining. He felt them like harness round him, smart and shiny harness, but bonds nevertheless. It seemed to James that the glimpse of the Surrey Gardens had reminded him of the advantages of harness.

Yet Phœbe's letter did not leave him unmoved. He was only just becoming used to life alone. At first there had been fearful moments, and even now they recurred occasionally when he felt lost and had known himself to be but half a thing without her.

The fundamental James, who had never altered save to get extra mental belongings since he was first able to think, belonged to Phœbe and she to him. He was so cold without her. Her letter wrung him because it was entirely comprehensible to him; he knew exactly what she had thought, and how she had felt when she set down the words. Had she written him a book she could have told him little more about herself.

It is always difficult to escape from youth; its hopefulness, its optimistic belief in the privileges of desire, its despair, and its sense of outrage and injustice at disappointment—all these spring on a man, inflicting indelicate agony when he is no longer prepared. James, who had done with youth, was suddenly stabbed so painfully by it that the tears came into his eyes. He tore up the letter into stamp-sized pieces, and was going to stuff them into the grate when he changed his mind, knowing it was weakness. He put the pieces into the snuff box and packed it back carefully into the secret drawer. Then he went down the stairs and out of the house, locking the front door behind him.

He felt much as he had done on first leaving Groats; a great, warm part of his life was done. This was a new man walking down the street. This was James Galantry Esquire, a gentleman of property and small but secure position. A gentleman who would have interesting children.



## Chapter Twenty-two

“Hurry,” say the Years, “hurry, hurry, hurry!”

All the time the Dance goes on, sometimes so fast that the pattern of it becomes obscure as the performers whirl by, bemazed and giddy, sometimes so slowly that an individual can look about him and see the convolutions, the turns and the half-turns, the bowing to partners, the linkings-up, and the swings away. But there is never any pause, never any rest or breathing space, always the line waves on.

Ten autumns after the one in which James had first taken possession of his house in Penton Place found him walking down the street again, little changed save at heart, and there not drastically. There had been shocks for him in the past ten years, some triumphs and some tragedies. Experience had not made him old exactly, but in common with many other men of his period, he was remarkably adult.

He found himself a member of a peculiarly successful generation, which with all its faults had done something and done it very quickly. In a quiet way the times were tremendous; the Island and its middle-classes, which were still only one generation away from working-classes, were in bud and flower. All kinds of new shoots were springing up; the great schism in the Church had occurred, and High, Low and Broad were now living divisions which had risen phoenix fashion out of what had once been a comparatively moribund whole. The Chartists had tried and failed, but they had prized up the crust of ignorance and indifference so that the well-to-do were beginning to wonder whether material success really was the only answer after all; development, mistakes and triumph were taking place in every possible direction and at great speed.

This particular autumn was a time of high lights. *Dombey & Son* was coming out in parts; Tennyson was roaring his sonorous sweetness to enraptured thousands; and Jenny Lind was taking the Town.

Meanwhile, on a solid base of common sense, social fancy work was raising a fussy and ridiculous head. The codes were growing tighter and less flexible, Paris had thought up the crinoline, and

Victorian gothic was flourishing, not only in architecture, for manners, too, were fast acquiring the same rigid and meaningless curls and decorations.

James was an inheritor, one of the stalwarts of the rank and file, and he walked down the neat road looking very tidy and in keeping. He wore a good, skirted black coat, sand-coloured trousers strapped under his boots, and a splendid waistcoat embroidered in carefully blended colours of sand, black and occasional touches of green. It was perhaps a little sporting for his middle years, but how pleasant. His hat was a glistening stove-pipe, and an atmosphere of comfort and respectability surrounded him like a nimbus.

He walked quickly because he was curious, but he was resolutely determined not to be excited by the letter from the unknown solicitor which had reached him that morning. It had invited him to call on a matter which would be of benefit to him, but had said no more. No one could have received it quite unmoved, but James had remained obstinately placid lest he should be disappointed. To take his mind off the subject he was considering his present condition and the last few years of his life.

Jinny, he still avoided the Lizzie, had proved unexpected. His recollections of the first few weeks of his marriage were coloured by the dogs which Whippy Fletcher had brought him as a wedding present. It had been typical of Whippy to pick on a couple of Newfoundlands who had been trained to rise up on their hind legs and remove the hat from off the head of any visitor who should be so ill-mannered as to enter the house without uncovering. They had appealed to James, as Whippy had known they would, but they were a tavern joke and had struck a wrong note from the outset, especially with some of Mrs. Timson's relations. It had been very unfortunate, James thought.

Scraps of the stuff of his period had stuck to James as he grew through it. By this time some of them were incorporated in him, and old Galantry's sense of humour was sometimes in danger of being overlaid by the Victoriana.

The discovery that in many ways Jinny was a silly little thing had been a great astonishment to James. The two women he had known best before his marriage were Dorothy and Phœbe, and both of these were capable and far more shrewd than he. Between them they had given him a slightly exalted view of the sex as a whole. Jinny was certainly not capable, nor was she shrewd, and there

were times when her helplessness appalled him.

On the first night of his marriage he had dispensed with servants in the house; it was a delicacy (in the present case, meaningless) which reached depths of indelicacy difficult to stomach by people of almost any other age. Certainly old Will Galantry would have raised his eyebrows at it, as would any twentieth century sophist. Anyway, James did it because Mrs. Timson told him to, and in the morning after a night of decorous slumber, he asked his wife to make him a cup of tea. To this day he remembered her despair, her fear. She could not. She went downstairs obediently, but remained in the cold kitchen shivering and in tears, and when at last he found her there she dared not tell him. It was a mountain out of the most trivial of molehills. She did not know how. James, who looked quite ridiculous in a flapping nightshirt and shawl, had taken the situation in hand, and had given her her first lesson. By the time he had finished with her she could make tea.

From this unpropitious beginning he went on to find out that he had to teach her a number of things, and there were times when he thought Mrs. Timson had presented him with a practically unwritten book. Jinny was a child; she was most willing, most obedient, most long suffering. Her powers of endurance were so great that he never comprehended them. He assumed she did not feel as much as other people did. He assumed Frank went out of her mind like words from a wiped slate. He assumed she accepted the difference in her life as the birds accept the change in the weather. They sing less, perhaps, but appear just as happy.

In those days he put her down as a little simple, perhaps not even quite normal, but certainly very sweet and docile. Some of her faults were curable, he found with relief.

At Tarn's, the good bonnet shop near the Elephant and Castle, for instance, she was apt at first to be quite insanely extravagant, and he had had to put his foot down. Yet she had not resented his interference at all, but had accepted the ruling, and now asked his permission before she made any purchase. But he never cured her of her friendliness, and in this he thought she was absurd. She was never familiar, never free, of course, but so friendly to absolutely anybody. The beggars of the district congregated round her like birds at a crumb table, while her servants looked after her as if she were their little sister. And that was a time when good servants did not behave like that.

No one spoke ill of her, everybody loved her absentmindedly. James did himself when it came to that. But money meant nothing to her, nor could she be trusted to keep anything unless expressly told not to give it away. She loved clothes, and kept herself very neat and lovely, and yet did not live for them. Ugliness, dirt, evil, passed over her like filth over a glazed sink. She emerged from anything of the sort unsoiled. She was a fool, of course, but an odd sort of fool. There was strength in her somewhere.

Her religion made James slightly nervous. As far as he could make out it was genuine, and he was glad of that, of course. All nice women and decent men were highly religious at that time of day, but Jinny took her religion with a difference. She was not churchy, but she often read her Bible in odd moments and apparently for fun. She took it with enjoyment and comprehension. James did not mind her enjoying it, he thought that very charming in her, but he was bothered if he approved of her understanding it for even the official interpreters appeared to him to differ greatly in their readings. Yet she was always sitting with her head in it, and appeared to regard it, if he could be forgiven for such a blasphemous thought, as a sort of spiritual Mrs. Beeton. He could make little of her there, and once or twice she had puzzled him in the same sort of way.

In that first year her silence about the baby had struck him as being remarkable, and there were times when he wondered what on earth she imagined he believed about it. It was not mentioned between them, she bore her pains and discomforts stoically, and when at last he did refer to its eventual arrival, she seemed glad he expected it, as well she might be. But that was all; she never spoke of it.

All this, of course, was in the early days now mercifully left behind. Since then there had been changes. At this ten-year distance his earliest recollection of Jinny's first baby was not immediately after it was born, but later when it could just toddle. Even now when he remembered the incident he was discomforted. Jinny had been in the garden, wearing a white dress with dark blue upon it; her full skirt had swept the daisies and her tight bodice had called attention to the corseted, artificial lines of her back and waist. As James had looked down from his window at her, she had called aloud to someone, and her tone had been intelligent as if she expected to be understood. Until that moment James had thought of

the child solely as an object and a possession, but now he realized there was in his house some new person with a life and a soul of his own. For an instant the discovery struck a chill in him.

"William," Jinny had called, "come here, my darling, come here!"

He had appeared then staggering out from behind the syringa, and had stood for an instant, his knees bent and his arms swinging, as if he were preparing to leap up at her. His blazing blue eyes were dancing and his yellow hair burned in the sun. He had looked so strangely tall and golden, so enchantingly different, that James had felt again all the old admiration which had so enthralled him long ago.

On the heels of that memory had come another. He had remembered old Larch speaking. "A good dam will always throw to the sire, come what may." And then suddenly, born of these two recollections, had come hatred, utterly unexpected, inexcusable hatred of the child.

James had caught the emotion in himself by its very tail, and had dragged it out like a demon and pitched it away from him. He had been startled and angry, disgusted at himself; he made a mental note to buy the child a present at once.

Later when he had put the whole incident as far back in his mind as possible, another idea occurred to him. The time had come when he must get him a son of his own.

James's first child, a daughter, died at birth, and its coming very nearly killed Jinny. The doctor who attended her had taken it upon himself to point out that she was still very young. To-day as James walked down the road from his house he gathered up the intervening years and bundled them back into the bureau of his memory without looking at them. They had not been unhappy for him, he had worked out a life for himself in which his home was a base; nor, as far as he knew, had they dragged wearily for Jinny. She had played with her baby, practised her music, and done anything James told her. Also she had accompanied James when he sang, and had been very nice to him when he had tried to play the violin, and had made, as he said himself, 'the very devil of a noise.'

Theirs was an entirely amicable relationship. They met in everything but outlook, and James who knew that his own brightly-coloured landscape with its background of country deals and

speculations, and its vistas of convivial club evenings, music hall nights, and backstage adventures, was completely unknown to her, had no idea at all what picture her window showed. They were like an old child and a young child pausing before a booth at a fair, holding hands, but looking into different peep-shows.

Now at last she was going to have another baby, and all promised well. James was excited and very fond of Jinny in an entirely new way. The terrible inferiority complex which had made it possible for him to desire to father another man's child, was appeased, and he was as near that mood of long ago when he had felt god-like as ever in his life since. He longed to see the new baby and know it himself translated. He wanted to show it to Dorothy.

He had never taken Jinny or little William to see her when he went himself, and he knew she resented that. However, he dared not. He would not meet that odd look which he knew must come into her eyes when she should glance up at him from Frank Castor's child. She would see it all and would know why it had happened too.

James was thinking about that why now. It had been a good idea, he was certain of it. In spite of all the obvious disadvantages, in spite of unexpected emotional reactions in himself, it had been a good idea. The possession of Jinny and the house and the servants and the garden with the syringa tree, had given him the background he needed. The possession of that fair, intelligent boy had given him something else, something he was not going into even now, alone with himself. Sufficient was it, he felt, that he had conquered something; come out on top of a disability. Now he was the man he had always wanted to be. Next week perhaps he would have a child to continue him.

He was in an excellent mood by the time he reached the solicitor's office. The interesting words 'of benefit' lingered in his mind. All the same he knew no one who could leave him money so he kept his hope in rein.

It was a very fair-sized firm, he discovered, evidently an old-established City business tucked into a narrow house in St. Mary Axe. The clerks in the downstairs room treated his broadcloth with deference, and upstairs the senior partner, a pleasant, roundish person called Dewsey, stared at him blankly when he first walked into the office.

It was a curious interview, for Mr. Dewsey was so uncharacteristically ill at ease. He made a great business of establishing James's identity, although this was necessarily something of a formality since much of the ground had been covered in tracing him at all. The more convinced he became the more uncomfortable he grew, until James was slightly irritated. Finally the lawyer sat back in his chair.

"Mr. Galantry," he said, taking the plunge, "have you ever heard of a person called Blackberry Smith?"

James said he had not, but spoke cautiously now, suspecting one of his many horse deals.

"Well, it would appear," said Mr. Dewsey, keeping his tone deferential, "it would appear, my dear sir, that he is your half-brother. A most honourable, a most exact young man."

After a moment of bewilderment, during which his mind had gone to Lucius and Young Will and all the rest of old Galantry's sons, James suddenly comprehended. The colour came into his face, and he got up.

Mr. Dewsey, who was not unprepared for some reaction of the sort, rose also and stepped between his visitor and the door.

"Wait! Mr. Galantry! Wait, I implore you. It will not be an inconsiderable estate by any means."

It was more the tone than the words which halted James, for it conveyed that he was expected to behave in an undignified manner, and was doing so. He turned back at once and sat down again with his legs wide apart and his hands, which held his hat and gloves, resting on the silver knob of his stick, so that his big dramatic head with the curls appeared to Mr. Dewsey just above them.

The lawyer dealt with him very cautiously, and his story when it came out at last after a deal of tissue wrappings was not entirely extraordinary, although it was so unexpected. Reduced to unlegal English it amounted to a couple of facts. Shulie was dying, and wished to leave James part of her possessions.

She had married again on rejoining her people, and by her second husband had surviving one son—Blackberry Smith. This young man had obeyed his mother's wishes to the letter and had instructed Mr. Dewsey to find his half-brother, so that James might receive his portion in the approved manner from his parent's hand.

James received the information in silence. He had never dreamed

of such a thing happening, but he knew at once that it was not remarkable. He also knew something which Mr. Dewsey did not, which was that his half-brother must have been born in September and had not been much of an infant to look at so that his name had been given to him in explanation, as one might say a 'blackberry kitten' or a 'blackberry foal'; one not having much chance of survival since it had the winter to go through before it was weaned.

Mr. Dewsey, mistaking his visitor's silence, became suddenly defensive.

"You may be a little surprised to find a firm of this standing having a gypsy client," he said.

"No, sir," said James. "No, sir, I am not." All the same he was surprised; surprised in the true sense of the word. Here in the very midst of London, hemmed in by the black buildings, shut down by the fog pall overhead, held fast by the comfortable respectability of Penton Place, he was yet surprised by the green glade, by the red caravans, by the wood smoke curling up through the leaves.

Unfortunately Mr. Dewsey still felt bound to give an explanation. James was the sort of person to whom people did give explanations because he looked so informed.

"I inherited my father's practice in Norwich," said Mr. Dewsey, "and among his clients there were several of these—these—ah—wanderers. One of them preferred to follow me to London than to trust anyone else, so it was quite natural for his son to come to me when in any difficulty. My father's client was Jacoby Smith, the second husband of Shulamite Galantry. He's dead, of course."

James nodded absently. "Where are they now?" he enquired.

Mr. Dewsey was embarrassed to confess that he did not exactly know, but any letter he sent Blackberry Smith care of the landlord of "The White Lion" in Wych Street seemed to reach him in an unusually short space of time. Indeed, he said, there had been occasions when he had received an answer (written by some obliging parson and signed with Blackberry's mark) in as little as a week.

"If she is dying, they will not move if they can help it," said James. "I think we should go down there wherever it is."

Mr. Dewsey agreed that would be the wisest plan. He was puzzled by James, who had made no enquiries as to the probable size of his inheritance. His appearance had been unexpected, but his



attitude was more so.

"I understand you have not seen your mother since you were sixteen years old," he ventured.

"That is so," said James.

It was going through his mind that he could wash his hands of the whole thing, could take nothing, and could, at the price of insulting his own blood, stay safely away from the thing he had been trying to escape all his life. Even before he considered it, however, he knew it would not do. James was too firmly planted upon the earth to believe in flight as a means of relief. There was in such matters, he considered, no escaping save in growing.

"Yes!" he said, suddenly getting up, "yes! We'll go down."

## *Chapter Twenty-three*

More than once on the drive out from Halstead in Essex to the hollow of open ground under the hillocks above Sible Hedingham, James wondered why on earth he had brought Mr. Dewsey with him, although in all reason he could not very well have come without him.

It was a lowering day, and the plump lawyer was inclined to be apprehensive. He was a man who made a great virtue of being interested in everything and everybody, but he had not the true courage of real curiosity, and while he was entertained to think his calling carried him into many odd corners and situations, he yet wanted to make it quite clear to James that gypsies (their notorious dishonesty and lack of any social pretensions whatever being understood) were not a commonplace with him.

James did not care a tinker's dam for him or his habits. From old Galantry he had inherited the eighteenth-century belief that a gentleman only tolerated his attorney in the most difficult of moments, and that in all others he was bound to be but an unpleasant reminder of mortality or debt.

He was also worried about other things. There had been a nurse at Penton Place when he left, and also a highly secretive and self-important old woman with an ominous bag, and all through the drive his thoughts kept veering round to Jinny and the coming child.

As they turned down a lane, which was scarce more than a cart track between two high hedges, Mr. Dewsey gave up trying to talk, and James was very glad of it. He was not at all sure what he was in for, and was not looking forward to the coming interview. Their driver, who was a man from the town, was not easy either, since it was a lonely place and his fares looked well worth robbing.

At this moment they swung round a bend in the lane and came suddenly upon the hollow. The sight of it astonished James, and for the first time he was faintly apprehensive for their physical safety. In the back of his mind he had been carrying a picture of the wood behind Jason's house, and the half-dozen caravans there, the few poor horses hobbled nearby, the single fire, and the tinker's donkey

hovering warily in the middle distance.

This was something quite different. There were nearly fifty caravans set in small groups on the poor turf; the horses were in droves, and everywhere there were fires with numbers of lean figures standing round each. It looked like a fair ground in the very early morning. There was squalor there, and colour, and much show. Everybody was in his best clothes. The caravan doors were thrown wide as they always were at Appleby, with everything at all valuable which each owner possessed pushed well into the foreground. Shawls and coverlets, embroidered waistcoats and skirts, household china, lamps, and bowls, and trays; everything, all put out to be seen.

As the trap slowed down and finally stopped, the whole gathering turned and stood silent, looking at them. It was a dramatic moment. The driver began to mutter that it would be wise to go back, and only then did it dawn upon Mr. Dewsey that if there should be some trickery hiding in the commission which had been entrusted to him, then he and his client might be in a very disadvantageous position at the moment. Two alone, and miles away from anywhere.

“God bless my soul! Who are they all?” he demanded nervously. “I had no expectation of anything like this. Who are they all?”

James rose without answering and began to climb carefully to the ground. He knew quite well who they were. All of them, every sharp-eyed man, every ragged child, must be a Smith and his relation. The best part of the whole tribe must be present.

He went forward stolidly. His shoulders looked enormous under his long coat and his tall hat sat squarely on his big head. In his dark face his strong white teeth showed in a faint irrepressible smile, for in spite of his embarrassment which was acute, the old Galantry in him was tremendously amused.

Blackberry Smith came out of the silent crowd to meet him. James knew him at once, he could hardly help it; they were very alike. They were not doubles, of course, there were many points of difference. The pure gypsy was a smaller man, and his skin unexpectedly was not so dark, while his eyes were those of his race, small and bright and wide open, without, of course, the Galantry hoods. But nevertheless, there was a very definite likeness.

Mr. Dewsey used to tell the story afterwards and always spoilt

his tale by insisting that he could not tell the difference between them, which was absurd.

The thing which almost unbalanced James, and for which he never forgave Shulie, was Blackberry's costume. Everybody in the gathering was unconventionally clad, for best clothes in that company were nearly always remarkably old, not to say ancestral clothes, and James was surrounded by an array of archaic finery. But Blackberry was in a costume which he recognized. It dragged him back through the years to Groats in candlelight. It was old Galantry's evening suit. James had never heard that Shulie had taken it with her, yet here it was, crumpled and still reeking of the wormwood in which it had been stored against the moth. The plum-coloured silk of the breeches clung to Blackberry's fine muscles, and the laced cuffs riding up his shirtless forearm, disclosed his dirty wrists. James had not set eyes on the suit for over thirty years, but he knew it at once and he took off his hat, not so much to Blackberry, as to his clothes.

The young gypsy held out his hand and said with ingratiating gentleness: "Welcome, brother."

On seeing the situation was in hand, Mr. Dewsey had come bustling up by this time, and he used to relate this incident with great effect.

James accepted the greeting as a formal one, and said "Thank you." Meanwhile talk had broken out everywhere, and there was a great deal of sibilant comment in a language Mr. Dewsey did not understand and found disturbing. Gradually, however, he gathered it was approving, and received the impression that it was James's physique which was being discussed. Only then did it occur to him that all his legal proofs of identity would go for very little in this community, and that James would stand or fall by his appearance. To his relief there seemed to be no question about this, nor, when he looked round from one dark face to another could he think there would be.

The whole scene impressed Mr. Dewsey. The rising land in the background was chocolate from the plough, and the trimmings of the brown and black hedgerows became more distinct as they crept nearer to the bowl of the hollow. Then came the bright caravans gaudy and defiant, and among them moved the ragged people splendid in their dirty finery, while lastly, in the centre, stood the square Victorian gentleman holding his shining and sophisticated

hat.

Blackberry had a natural dignity himself, but at the moment it was handicapped. He was helplessly eager to show off before his kinsfolk, and anxious to ingratiate himself with his splendid half-brother. He was trying also to remember all the tricks his mother had taught him. Old Galantry had lived on in Shulie, or at least some of him had, and in her mixture he had undergone some odd changes.

To James, Blackberry was a nightmare. Clad in this dreadful corpse of a suit, he had a painfully familiar way of bowing, bending his back stiffly as if he were an old man, and a trick of waiting until after a sentence and then laughing a little. These were not natural mannerisms, but schooled ones, and James thought it typical of Shulie to pick on old Galantry's personal idiosyncrasies, and advance them in her ignorance as evidences of a superior civilization. He was shocked to the soul. He saw what had happened at once, and realized that Shulie must have loved his father to have treasured and re-taught so many little memories of him. But to find scraps of him here, travestied and simplified, was indescribably repugnant.

The circumstance gave him a key to the people with whom he was to deal. It was a betrayal of the very simple mind behind all this show; they were children, wandering infants in the green world; naughty, dirty, cunning children; younger and sillier than other races.

He recognized their enormous interest in him for what it was, and knew they were delighted that he should look important and prosperous, and that if he had been shabby they might have turned on him. His humiliation increased at every moment, and he hated them because there was something very like them deep in himself which made him secretly proud of their admiration.

Blackberry Smith led the way to the caravan where their mother lay, and James mounted the steps to look down into a yellow face which he did not recognize. Shulie had aged very early, as gypsy women do, and she was now very close to dying. James saw a tooth-less face, creased with many wrinkles, and expressionless as an apple. She was still breathing, but already there was a sightless glaze over her black eyes, and she showed no sign of recognition as he bent over her. The air in the waggon was nauseating, and the coloured shawl over the couch only too obviously hid filth and rags,

while the little claw hand on the silk was dirty.

It was certainly not poverty stricken, nor were there any evidences of neglect; rather there was a suggestion of a primitive fussiness. It reminded James of the death-bed of some greatly loved animal. He could not bring himself to speak. This younger man, so like himself and yet so different, was in charge here. The woman was his mother, not James's.

Blackberry Smith slid his hand under the pillows and drew out a bundle of ragged documents and a greasy leather bag. He would have placed them in James's hands had the older man not recoiled from them.

"No," said James. "No."

"No, brother?"

"No."

"I would like you to take them." Blackberry spoke very softly but with dignity. "I do not want what is not mine, brother. That would not be lucky."

So it was not only on the surface; Shulie's teaching went deeper and was there in the same way travestied and made infantile.

James was being hard tried, and he was learning in the process, yet he did not move.

Mr. Dewsey had followed James, and now stood nervously on the top step half in and half out of the door. He was regarding the scene within with mounting apprehension, and hoped to God Mr. Galantry would do nothing to offend.

The caravan was surrounded by a wolfish mob. At the moment it was friendly; he hoped sincerely that it would remain so.

"If I might advise," he began unhappily, and hesitated.

James saw him out of the corner of his eye and was suddenly amused. He smiled at his half-brother and took the proffered bundle. Afterwards he felt under his coat and took out his gold watch and chain, which he handed to Blackberry. He had no idea why he did it, or even that it would be acceptable; it was an odd thing to do on the face of it, and was in James's case purely impulsive.

Mr. Dewsey assumed it was a tribal custom, and may of course have been right, but James did not know.

Blackberry took the gift and seemed overcome, while the atmosphere improved noticeably. It was a strange incident, very

simple and primitive, and with Shulie lying there, her breathing hard, it was also terrible.

James had no idea of what his inheritance might consist, and was unaware that he held it. He remained looking down at the woman, trying to picture her as he had last seen her, and striving to reconcile the picture with this helpless little yellow face, bound with the white headcloth. He found he could not do it. She was gone. The Shulie who had stood in the wind with her arms outstretched was vanished, gone with the leaves, gone with Groats, gone with old Galantry and his own childhood. As far as he was concerned she had died long ago, and to his embarrassment he knew that he was relieved.

Then Blackberry touched him on the arm and said that they must eat together.

James left Mr. Dewsey as soon as they reached London. He had been away two days and a night, and was anxious to get back to Penton Place. Mr. Dewsey took charge of the documents, which appeared to be the title deeds of small parcels of property scattered all over the country, and the bag James took with him.

Its contents had disappointed and even annoyed the lawyer. It had consisted of three gold pieces, two of them early Louis d'or, and one an English guinea, a pair of old paste buttons in a daisy design, a small heart in something which Mr. Dewsey strongly suspected was brass, and a solitary marquise shoe buckle threaded with a purple ribbon. James had roared with laughter when he first set eyes on them, and had told Mr. Dewsey that his watch had cost him thirty guineas, a fact which seemed to delight him.

Mr. Dewsey thought he was mad, and was privately annoyed to find gypsies as vulgar and worthless as he had always heard they were.

James arrived home at dusk, and as he opened the door with his key an unmistakable atmosphere of bustle and excitement rushed down the hall to meet him. He could smell fires and cooking, and the comforting odour of soap. The harness of respectability slipped round him like loving arms. He found he knew what had happened without being told. He could see the good news in the maid's face as she came hurrying up for his hat and coat, and could hear it in the cheerful clatter from the kitchens down the service stairs.

Shulie and the hollow under the hillocks, Blackberry and the

coloured caravans, faded into a world of fantasy. They became like a tale in a book, far off, beyond the horizon.

In that moment of joyous return even Groats disappeared, even Jed and "The Golden Boar," even Phoebe and the theatre and Drury Lane. They ran into each other and faded and drifted away. This was reality.

He ran upstairs, shaking the floors with his weight, and arrived red-faced and breathless outside Jinny's door. It was opened to him before he knocked by a nurse who motioned to him to be quiet. He would have brushed past her to get to the bed where his wife lay, pale and satisfied, with big eyes looking hopefully to him for approval, but the woman arrested him and he turned to find himself looking down at the child in her arms.

"It's a girl, sir," she whispered. "A lovely little girl."

James looked down at his first living child and saw a little yellow face which was seamed and lined like a withered apple; a fold of white shawl fell over the top of her head like a kerchief, and as he stared she moved her lips exposing tiny toothless gums. A dreadful thrill of recognition ran through James.

The baby regarded him with eyes from which the shadows had robbed their early blue, leaving them as black and as bright as they would ever be. Shulie. Shulie to the life.

The nurse put back the shawl. "Lovely curly black hair just like a little gypsy," she said proudly. "Oh, sir, she is the dead spit image of you."



## Chapter Twenty-four

There was no question of reincarnation, at any rate in its popular sense, between Shulie and the new baby. Nothing so elementary, so sweeping, or so easy. One died round about the time that the other one was born, and the similarity between them was phenomenal, but their souls were their own.

James called his daughter Deborah after a character in one of Lovell's plays, and she had a great deal of her mother in her as well as Shulie. She went through the world with part of it honestly believing she was half-witted; another suspecting her of being some sort of unrecognized saint, and still another who stood amazed before an iron commonsense which sometimes appeared in her.

However, all this came later, and the important thing at the moment is what happened to James.

One James died when he first saw Deborah and Jinny's son William side by side, and the new James, who slid into his skin then, was a slightly different person. When James saw Deborah growing more and more like Shulie; when he took her to see Dorothy, and the old woman let her eyes grow wet as she watched the child; when James saw William holding the toddler so that his head was close to hers, and the startling difference between them was very apparent; then a number of things, ambitions and prides, ingredients, stuff of himself died beneath that cold ray of realization. The James who went on living without them was no more the same mixture than a recipe containing *aqua vita* is the same thing when it is left out.

As a father in that particular period he had tremendous powers in his own home. It would almost seem that the Victorians heard so much about God the Omnipotent Father that each family man thought himself justified in setting up as father the omnipotent God. James had absolute sway over his children in everything save life and death, and thought it an excellent thing.

He had four more children, who arrived in quick succession. These were a son, Thomas; a daughter who died of smallpox at the age of four; and two more boys, Richard and Henry. All these save the daughter, who resembled her mother, were of the Shulie kind.

They were short, dark-skinned folk, all with the same black eyes without hoods; there was no sign of old Galantry in the whole pack of them. It was a great disappointment to James.

The change in him after Deborah's birth was actual. He gave up aspiring, and in one way this made him a far more definite personality than he had ever been before. At home he was autocratic, more secretive than ever, slightly selfish, and with an extraordinary notion of his own dignity. Away from home, behind the scenes with Toole, the comedian, or at his Debating Club, or at the music hall, he was a noisy schoolboy delighting in the most laborious of practical jokes, as was then the fashion.

His money affairs did not give him much trouble, but they did not improve to match the size of his family, and meanwhile the country had just undergone the worst depression in its history, so that Whippy and the Jasons had needed help from the amateur of horseflesh. On the other hand, James's investments had done very well, and his houses brought him in small, steady sums, but he saw that the old order was gone, and that whether he liked it or not his children must be self-supporting.

Therefore the new James took a new view of William. Still putting his faith in princes, he argued that if William was the superior being he had always assumed he would be, he would doubtless get on very well in almost any circumstances. So, since he had very little money to spend on education, and no influence in the professions either, he did the best he could for William, and applied to the Timson family for an apprenticeship for him in the paint and ink-making concern.

He supported William during this seven-year penal servitude, and pointed out to him very frankly that if there was any substantial inheritance coming from anywhere, it must come from the Timsons. To do James justice, he did no more for Tom; but for Deborah he thought of other things.

Although she reminded him so vividly of Shulie, he loved Deborah. She was so very much his own, and he knew, as one does know such a thing of oneself, that she needed every chance. James saw his way to giving her this. The gypsy inheritance—James and Mr. Dewsey always called it 'The Smith Estate'—had turned out to be not altogether negligible despite the unpromising contents of the bag. The legal work involved was considerable, but the properties concerned proved to be unexpectedly in order. There were no

counter claims, and Shulie and Blackberry had bought with great sagacity. Both James and the lawyer were surprised. It was a curious collection. There was a cluster of hovels in Latchingdon; a slaughter-house in Layer Breton; two little forges, one at Tey and the other at White Colne; a forlorn little inn on the road between Wormingford and Bures; and at least half a dozen little pightles scattered all over the place, one of these in the very centre of a sporting estate brought James a considerable sum. There were one or two houses also, nothing at all large, but all in good repair.

James took pleasure in going round to see these new possessions, and often he was startled to find how very much they were the sort of things he might have bought himself had he had a gypsy's opportunities in the matter of rent-collecting. The date on which each rent became due always coincided with a fair in the neighbourhood, and it was easy to pick out the tribes' yearly itineraries from an examination of these.

Since James had not the same programme, he sold most of the property, only retaining one small cottage in the Colne Valley called Farthing Hall. This cottage of wattle and daub possessed a fine pantile roof, and when James went to look at it he found it was let to an old woman who reminded him strongly of Dorothy. She paid him three pounds cash and three bushels of spice apples a year for it, and he let her remain there until she died, the apples arriving in London just before Christmas. Afterwards he kept the cottage for himself, and used to send the family down there for holidays, or when he wanted to be on his own in London.

When the "Smith Estate" was finally wound up James retained just over five thousand pounds. He invested this carefully so that it brought him in about one hundred and ninety pounds a year, and in his mind that money was extra and set on one side for Deborah. The arrangement gave him great satisfaction and put him at ease with himself. It marked the point at which he gave up feeling as he had done on the evening in the cornfield when he had run away from Galantry and Young Will as they sat in the dining-room at Groats. He never felt again that he would blast his way through any destiny which might lie in front of him. He felt he had done it. It had been an unconventional, even ruthless performance, but it was done.

James developed some queer habits in the fifteen years after Deborah was born. The drives in the park, for instance, those were unusual. They came about like this. One spring day, James having

purchased a new gig with rubber-tyred wheels by Mr. Reading, then practically the first of its kind, decided to take Jinny for a drive through the town to Hyde Park and back. He was always afraid that she might catch cold, for he hated illness, and on this occasion he instructed her to wear her old, thick brown dress, and her short fur jacket and muff, even if they were not particularly fashionable. Jinny did as she was told, of course, and she looked well enough, but not expensive. They had just reached the Park and were enjoying the smooth motion of the wheels when they both became aware of a young man who was walking on the footway. As soon as he caught sight of Jinny he grew very pale, and with a fumbling gesture which betrayed him, raised his hat. Jinny bowed, but she closed her eyes like a child, and was still icy cold when she returned home.

James looked squarely at young Frank Castor, whom he had never seen before. He recognized him at once because of the likeness to his father. That was all; the gig flashed by, and James appeared to have missed the incident. He spoke to Jinny of other things, and refused to see anything odd in her faint replies. Yet on his way home he called in at Jay's and bought her a complete outfit, choosing the clothes himself, and turning the shop upside down until she appeared to his satisfaction.

The following day he drove her through the Park again, all dressed up in her new clothes, but this time without encountering anyone of interest.

Blackberry might easily have done such a thing. James knew that and did not care. Moreover, he did it again on the corresponding date the following year, but this time he bought Jinny's outfit some days earlier. It was on the fifth of April, and he did it every year so that it became a tradition. Never once did he give any explanation to his wife, and never did they meet Frank Castor again.

If James wondered what Jinny thought about it, he did not think very hard, for he was not by nature a cruel man.

There were other minor evidences of the change in James.

For one thing, he produced a theory that all lawyers were dishonest, simply so that many of his transactions might be done personally in cash. In true gypsy fashion he liked the gold money, and the small drawers in the bureau in his own sitting-room were frequently stuffed with it.

Then, when his own black curls thinned, as they did early, he went with much secrecy to Head, the famous wig-maker, and got himself a toupé. When he died there were thirty of these, gradually fading from black to grey, from grey to white, all set neatly on little stands in his cupboard.

His politics, which were Liberal, became more rigid with the years; his autocratic behaviour at home grew more definite. He collected and used a vast store of aphorisms, and his pride and dignity became enormous.

Yet if James was fading, if the flower of his life was widening to its fullest extent, if the petals were separating one from another and would soon begin to curl, leaving the hard green fruit of the man bare and unlovely, the plant was not dying by any means. Already the shoots around him were hardening and forming into buds. Among them the foreign shaft which was William was growing very tall and distinctive.

## Chapter Twenty-five

James would never have agreed that it was social stability which dominated his life, yet all the struggle and consequent growth in it arose from that. James put his faith in imaginary princes; William put his in visible cash.

There was one good thing about William: he did work. Of all the Galantrys—and, at any rate, he bore that name—he alone had the driving itch for toil without which few men achieve material success. He had other peculiarities also, and even before his quasi-religious phase, and Spurgeon, and that remarkable invention of his, *The Converted World*, he exhibited traits which were foreign and extraordinary to the family.

At seventeen, with four years of his apprenticeship done, William was a handsome, intelligent and serious young man. Mrs. Timson was hardening into a bitterly disappointed woman, keeping regret and disillusion at bay with a blind barrier of sheer silliness in these days, and she used to whisper to her eldest son (the other William, always called Willitimson) that poor Jinny's boy looked like a Somebody. This always annoyed Willitimson, who had taken over the firm on his father's death, and was engaged to marry the young widow of his father's junior partner, and thus was William's absolute boss.

He was an undistinguished little person himself, and he resented his nephew's tall superiority, although he loved his sister, Jinny.

William began with many advantages. The social stability for which James had sacrificed so much was his by right; his father was an independent gentleman, his manners were good, and his speech fashionable, and his mother was the sister of the head of the firm.

The other apprentices were jealous of him to begin with, but his self-assurance made it a pleasure to him to go out of his way to be charming to them, while his brains and energy made him their leader.

To Jinny he was Frank come back. She instructed him early and honestly in the mechanics of sex, and after that she thought him perfect. To her he was not only the real Frank, but Frank made right, the ideal in whom she had hoped and believed. William was

very like his father; he had the cold blue Castor eyes which could express utter disbelief with a blankness which was frightening. They were like a blue sea on a bitterly cold day. In all his life they never changed; they often laughed, but never warmed. For the rest, he had a really wonderful head covered with thick gold hair, which looked as if it was a deeper gold underneath; a strong grave face, and a magnificent carriage. Even in age he never lost that stance, and his grandchildren noticing it assumed for quite a time that he was God. It was typical of him that this mistake never shocked him.

To James he was Edwin Castor come out of the misty clouds where James himself had put him. As he grew to know the boy, he felt he was getting to know the man he had admired from a distance. Naturally William was not, in youth, nearly so clever or experienced as James, and James observing that was delighted, for he felt he was catching up with his main ideal at last. It made him very kind to William. He took him into his life and obtained pleasure from teaching such an apt pupil the gentle art of doing business.

The Victorian English, for all their faults, taught the modern world to do business, and at that time the cult was in full flower in London. James taught William what he had inherited from Shulie's ancestors, what he had learned in Mr. Philby's school, what Jed and Gustus had taught him, and one or two things he had found out for himself. As his share, William brought Castor's brain to bear on the subject, and also his other principal quality, the one Jinny had given him—courage. At an early age he began to show considerable gifts.

James taught William one other thing. It was that discovery of his about the liberation which lies in expression. It was not easy for James to pass this on, for he had never learned how to set himself free, but William grasped the theory. He had not the gift of words, but he saw what they were for and what they could do. He made this piece of information a very useful asset.

One of the more interesting things about William was that he never had any fear of not being able to make a living. Nearly everyone in his teens would seem to experience that terror, but not he. It was not even that he did not quite realize what it quite meant, for his experience at Timson's had shown him early what the struggle in the commercial world was like at that time. William saw what was required of him, and he thought he could do it on his

head. He could, too; that was what startled James.

During his apprenticeship William was handicapped by grim rules. For seven years he was bound to work for nominal pay with only the prospect of a very unremunerative job at the end of it. Moreover, his future prospects at Timson's, whatever they sounded like to James and Jinny in Willitimson's drawing-room, were not in reality particularly good. William realized that very early on. Willitimson's new bride already had a son of seven, a strong-looking child, and William knew that it would not be the clever nephew who would get any place in the sun in the firm. Besides, he saw no point in doing business that way. He felt himself intrinsically better than Willitimson, and any in his employ. He felt he was so far removed from them that the notion of taking anything from them disgusted him. He decided to make his own way.

There was considerable impudence in the decision, for this was the lush summer of English commerce; not the autumn, not the harvest, but the summer, when most of the fruits were visible but not quite ripe. The promise of wealth and comfort and unimagined luxury spread out on all sides, and everyone was tending his own little patch with the jealousy and excitement of the gardener a couple of weeks before the Show. At such a time it was not easy to consider sharing; in harvest, perhaps, but not now, in summer. Not now when the gold was not fully ripe.

The basic scheme of the middle classes, with its two horns—wealth and progeny—was well under way. Everywhere there were vast families growing up to guard and live upon the coming fortunes; enough was going to have to be a lot. It was a greedy, anticipatory time.

Into this came William, clear-headed, self-confident, and cold as an empty hearth. His first move was to notice the need for a new quick-drying paint, and to hunt up a chemist who could get him out a formula for one. While he was still articulated to Timson's it was of little use to him, since anything he produced during that time automatically belonged to them, but on the day he was free he applied for a patent and disclosed his secret to Willitimson. The result was an education to him.

The formula was not a fortune creator, but it was a useful thing, and Willitimson thought it might be worth investigating. He also thought William worth keeping, and after a long consultation with James he decided to give William the unique opportunity of serving



another long apprenticeship, this time in the new printing firm which Timson's had acquired.

Willitimson promised many concessions in the new agreement; all fees were to be waived, and the nominal pittance increased to as much as half a sovereign a week. James might not have accepted the offer had it not been that he was first and foremost a countryman, and still clung to the belief in the sacred tie between blood and blood. To his mind the important thing was that Willitimson was Jinny's brother, so when the man told his sister that he would look after her son, James believed him. William was coldly angry at the decision, but he made no objection and accepted his lot with a show of virtuous obedience.

William had been brought up by Jinny, and Jinny had tried to give him her own secret, but no one on earth can teach anyone else's heart to be true; and so it was with her teaching as it had been with James's. William saw the sense of the thing without being able to grasp the power himself.

William learnt from Jinny that it paid to be good, and became, so people said, a "prize hypocrite" in a period when the species flourished. In many ways he was successful, but always he was a dancer who never heard the tune, and a great many of the steps he took certainly went against the swing and put other people out.

He went to "Morland and Jones," the printers, in humility and obedience, and found a new trade to learn and a new part of the City to explore in Curry Street, round at the back of Shoe Lane. Whilst there he had several new ideas. They were small printers with one or two good accounts, the main one of which was a Government contract for the printing of pawn tickets; but they had other interests, including a little periodical called *The Elbow Chair*. This remarkable journal was produced at threepence and came out every fortnight. Its circulation never exceeded twelve thousand copies, but those were actually bought by the public, and it supported a bony young man called Mellish and his old father, who had started the venture.

These two, together with a boy whom William always identified with Smike in *Nicholas Nickleby*, wrote and laid out the entire paper, which was only sixteen quarto-size pages.

For a time William could not understand how such a journal sold at all, until it dawned upon him that it was the double page on

chess, with its problems and its news of tournaments, and other gossip about the game, which was its main attraction. The bright paragraphs on the front page, which were written by Mellish, and the serial story inside which was written by Mellish's father, were apparently nothing to do with the case. Every three months an article by a master of the game saved the wavering sale, and a small weekly prize for a problem steadied the boat.

William was most interested. He worked out the cost of the printing, the office and the distribution, and soon became fascinated. He saw the venture in its clearest and most material light. To him it appeared as a method of selling low-grade bulk paper at forty times its value, with the added advantage that the more of it one sold the higher the profit became. He saw, too, that it was the ink on the paper which did the selling, so that the only real problem was which words to print with the ink. Having arrived at this discovery, he put it by for a little and began to look about him, but he took care to make good friends with young Mellish, and went out of his way to be helpful to him.

The idea came later, but already its inspiration was in being.

At the Surrey Music Hall, behind James's house, there had been lately scenes of great excitement over some performances of an unusual kind. A new prophet had taken to teaching in that wilderness, and already there was a flutter about him in many circles. Spurgeon had been born practically next door to Mr. Philby's school. For a time he had been the boy preacher of the Eastern Counties, and now had come to London to draw the Town as if he were, as some of the more outspoken journals said contemptuously, "Grimaldi in a halo." He was a Dissenter, at that time a Baptist, before he split the Evangelicals over the relative unimportance of Immersion, and he was one of those sturdy East Coast men who see what they do see so vividly that there is no room in their universe for anything else.

By the standards of the Church he was uneducated, and in that perhaps lay some of his strength, if also nearly all his weakness; for just then, almost for the first time in British history, educated people were finding themselves at something of a disadvantage in matters of religion.

It would appear that Spurgeon, who was certainly an honest Christian, completely missed this dangerous corner by simply not knowing anything much about it. From the marshes he brought a

coarse, salty wind of old-fashioned Puritan God, which he bellowed at the smoke-dried prisoners of the Town. He had no culture and little dignity, and in many ways he made homely and vulgar everything he touched. He used to go into the pulpit like a man leaping off a cliff into a boiling sea, determined to thrash his way to dry land in any way that should seem most expedient once he was in the water. But he gripped the people. His antics attracted them, but his sincerity captured them. They came in thousands, and he made them laugh and cry and sing and think, all things they would not have done at home, to the glory of the Lord.

William listened to some of these sermons and the power of the man thrilled him. As always he saw the cold mechanics alone; he saw just how the spell was cast, without of course being able to do it himself, since he had not the secret of the essential fire, but he recognized that the fire was there, and he had a great respect for it, if not for quite the right reasons.

It is necessary to be scrupulously fair to William if he is to be understood. The Jinny in him was always frozen by the Castor; it was that chill, that lack of charity, which let him down every time.

William attached himself to Spurgeon's flock, and considered privately that he was a social ornament to it. In one way there was a certain amount of truth in that; from a modern standpoint the ramifications of the English class system of the mid-nineteenth century are bewildering, and it is difficult to believe that a long serial story in the magazine edited by the progressive George Augustus Sala could have for its theme the mischance arising from the love of a well-to-do yeoman Dissenter for a Church of England Squire's daughter. But this was so, and the same journal permitted a sneer at the man who said "Gentleman," when he meant "Dissenting Minister." It would appear that the two main divisions in the middle-classes even took their God to different doors. The upper seeing its Lord in an ornate front hall, while the lower entertained Him in a strictly utilitarian back lobby.

James saw William's sudden adherence to the Dissenters with misgiving. He himself had paid dearly for his social position, such as it was, and he looked on with astonishment and even envy as William threw away a plank of his own position so casually. However, on second thoughts, James was amused and remote, for William, of course, was not his son.

He felt very differently about Deborah. She was growing up, and

after three years with a third cousin of Jinny's, who kept a small private school, had gone on to another more fashionable boarding establishment on the South Coast. James wrote to the Head Governess insisting that she should be kept rigidly Church of England. He received a startled, even horrified assurance from the lady, who reacted as though he had written admonishing her to keep his daughter chaste.

With William, then, James was tolerant, but he laughed so much at the account of the young man's baptismal immersion that he had to take himself off on one of his trips to see Whippy and Bessie at "The Golden Boar" to get away from William's reproachful eyes. And in that he was old Will Galantry as much alive as ever he had been.

William found Jinny more sympathetic. She often accompanied him to his private pew in the Chapel, and because she loved him so she did not admit that when the preacher spoke of the difficulties of the journey to understanding, she could appreciate what he meant quite well without him climbing up the outside of the pulpit like a monkey, to show her; and knew most certainly that it was even more arduous than that.

William remained impressed by the Movement and the crowds fascinated him. He became one of the Leader's "Good Young Men," a band of enthusiasts who went about doing evangelical work. He supported the new Tabernacle which Spurgeon was building, and he made many earnest acquaintances. In all this he was quite sincere, but he was following a formula and not a star, and all the time his idea was gestating.

One day as he watched the crowds thronging the Gardens outside the Surrey Music Hall, and thought of the panting mass of humanity in the aisles, and the eager eyes fixed hopefully upon the vision which the earnest East Anglian evoked, it occurred forcibly and even reverently to William that here was a subject which would appeal to a great many more people than the venerable game of chess.

## Chapter Twenty-six

Twenty-three is a magical age; then failure is excusable and triumph magnificent.

When William was twenty-three he started *The Converted World*, married Miss Julia Cole, grew his first honey-coloured beard, and walked out in his first frock coat and high silk hat. A splendid figure of baroque manhood, looking more like Edwin Castor than ever.

The top hat made him at least six foot ten high, and Miss Julia looked up at him from her own four foot eleven and a half with respectful adoration.

It would have been a considerable year's work for anybody; *The Converted World* alone was one of those brilliant pieces of organization which appear afterwards something of an accident, a miraculous fall downstairs into the hallway of success, and which at the time feel like a day dream journey conducted by angels and driven by one's own staggering genius.

William collected the two Mellishes at a moment when *The Elbow Chair* had just died in its sleep, and when father and son were prepared to exchange chess for Christianity, or cheese if it came to it. He also collected Counsellor Percy Greatpiece, and that other extraordinary person, Clemmie Johns.

The Counsellor derived his title from the Hackney Corporation, and was a wealthy man. He backed William when he was in the throes of a terrifying conversion which strangely enough never seemed to do the Counsellor the spiritual or even moral good one might reasonably have expected from such a painful upheaval. At the time it reduced him to a grovelling mass of weeping fat who took up the carpet in his front room so that his naked knees might surfer the mortification of bare boards. But afterwards it left him much as before, but with a dreadful sanctimonious excuse for every dirty little thing he might take it into his wicked head to do.

However, at the time he backed William, and put the money on the credit side of the account he was so fearfully drawing up for some vague, but terrible heavenly auditor.

Clemmie Johns was an entirely different person. He was a pale wisp of a man some seven or eight years older than William who,

until they met, was never in a job for more than a month at a time. He had drifted so far and so often that he had no clear recollection of the country pedagogue who was his father, and when William found him he had only two real interests in life—beer and the Bible. His passion for Holy Writ was neither spiritual nor intellectual; he approached it from a peculiar angle of his own taking a delight in simply knowing it as one might know a dictionary or, say, the Crystal Palace Exhibition. Even at that age, and he grew far more proficient later, he was a walking concordance. He had an apt text with chapter and verse for everything that came in front of him, and never so far as the Galantry's saw, and they knew him well for forty years, read anything else, not even a daily newspaper, save, as it were, as a side reference. He attended Spurgeon's meetings to hear the quotations, which were many, and to give himself the exercise of recognizing their context, any slip in the words delighted him. He admired William because he said he was like Og, King of Bashan, "of the remnant of the giants. Josh, xii, 6."

William saw his usefulness at once; he took him out and bought him beer, and in the end gave him a trifling salary so that he should not starve. He sat in a corner of *The Converted World* office for the rest of his life.

Doubtless it was William's youth and ignorance which made it possible for him to bring out his journal at all. This was not an arid time in popular literature; on the contrary, the cheaper variety was in its early flower, and George Augustus Sala and his coterie were at their vituperant best. There was nothing stodgy about these writers, little even sober; they were rioting colossi and they expressed the full-blooded arrogance of a nation on top with acid sophistication in their pens.

Fleet Street was alive and history was being made there. It was a sixth form of a company, witty and violent and cruel and enthusiastic.

William sailed into the midst of it with next to no money, half a dozen hacks, one crank and an Idea, and he made a small fortune. Edwin Castor and Alfred Timson in their strange living partnership did none so badly as far as actual money was concerned.

*The Converted World* was naïve, even at that time of day, and it is possible that in that lay the secret of its popularity. The front page was always devoted to a single wood block which illustrated one of the items of violence in the news; one week there would be a

picture of a railway smash, perhaps, on another, arson in a timber yard, or an interesting robbery with menaces. Always the title beneath was a text, produced by the indefatigable Clemmie. Sometimes this was suitable, sometimes it was only verbally relative. "He made in Jerusalem *engines*, invented by cunning men. Chronicles II, xxv. 15" might caption the rail accident, or "I will prepare destroyers against thee, and they shall cut down they *choice cedars* and cast them into the *fire*. Jeremiah xxii. 17" the timber yard outrage.

Inside the place of honour was given to a sermon of the more provocative kind purchased from some popular pastor who agreed to preach it the following Sunday. On the other pages were young Mellish's "Notes" and old Mellish's serial; both lifted bodily from *The Elbow Chair*, with the single difference that now the news in the Notes concerned Chapel personalities and the hero of the serial was a dissenting Minister and not a chess player.

A very popular item was the article based on the front picture. This was a rehash of the news item considered from a hand of God angle, and decorated with many quotations. William always "saw to" this himself. He could not write it but he knew what he wanted, and he told young Mellish what to say. The rest of the paper contained advertisements of the two-inch box variety, a story for children about a family of youthful saints who anticipated the Boy Scout Movement, and a competition conducted by Clemmie, in which prizes were given for six unfamiliar texts tracked down to their sources. This was a little daring, and great care was taken to ensure that no charge of gambling could be brought against it. The prizes were always religious books acquired at a discount or sent in for review.

William had left Timson's half-way through his second apprenticeship, a circumstance only made possible by loopholes in the special articles which Willitimson had drawn up out of the generosity of his heart. Now he made somewhat arrogant amends by giving Morland and Jones his printing.

Willitimson promised James that this unexpected behaviour of his nephew would not prejudice his sister's children in his eyes, but he never again felt any responsibility for William although ever after he had a genuine admiration for him.

James was astonished by *The Converted World*. He thought it very clever, but when he said so he really meant that he thought the

whole thing was clever; the manufacture of the paper, the printing, and the drawing on the front page. He read the news article and thought that interesting. The rest, he supposed, was a little beyond him, and he dozed over it. The profit struck him as fantastic. To a man who had never permitted himself to make money openly this magical way of doing it was staggering. He smelled success in the venture and was convinced that his impression of Edwin Castor must have been shrewder than he knew, for William had certainly not got his brains from "poor Jinny." Jinny received the first copy off the press; it was carried to her by William himself and she laughed with him in the flush of triumph. Later, after she had studied it, she gave him her verdict.

"It's wonderful, Will. So very clever, my dear. But not religious."

"Not religious, Mama?" He stood looking at her, so good looking and so bewilderingly like Frank. His head was on one side like an interested terrier's, and for once his eyes were not assured but vulnerable, and almost blank with non-comprehension.

"No, dear," said Jinny, "not religious."

It was all she could tell him, and when he argued with her and pointed out the name of the Almighty in every other paragraph, let alone on every page, she stood her ground helpless and without the means of expression.

It was an important moment for William since he was as near loving Jinny as he ever did anyone, and he saw, just for an eyelid's flicker like a door opening and shutting a long way off, a gleam of something that was outside his vision. He did not follow it up, though, for many things were demanding his attention, and he kissed her and told her she was silly before he dashed away to see Mellish, who had just sent the boy down to report that he had had "an idea."

As soon as it became clear to William that *The Converted World* was going to sell in quantities, he felt himself not only justified, but chosen. It is difficult to convey this without his appearing slightly blasphemous, which he was not, but he did feel reassured, divinely rewarded for his own perspicacity in taking up religion at all. It was a good thing, he had proved it. Ever afterwards he swore by it.

A great many people believed he was a most arrant young humbug the world had yet produced. That disgraceful journal, *Toby*, printed a globe, or "World" converted into a chamber pot, out



of which ran rivulets labelled 'Cant,' 'Humbug,' 'Insincerity,' 'Sensationalism,' 'Hypocrisy' and 'Balderdash.'

William ignored this; it was a tough age, and he did not want the office wrecked. Spurgeon himself had had one of his meetings reduced to a shambles by malicious cries of "Fire," and the best part of a hundred of the Faithful killed and wounded in the stampede.

Other men more credulous, or perhaps more obstinately charitable, thought William must be a "Tool of Providence," and it is just possible that in some hands his product did more good than harm. He certainly meant very well, and, in fact, went just as far in the matter as his very good head alone would take him. He assumed that because his brains were sound his heart was also, and thus did not observe how often his desires and inclinations cheated him and made him not so much a villain as a silly ass.

He was delighted with himself, and congratulatorily affectionate towards the Deity. Ten months after *The Converted World* first appeared, he paid off Counsellor Greatpiece (who never forgave himself for not taking up an interest in the business, or William for not pressing it), and married Miss Julia Cole without the customary two-year betrothal.

With earnest solemnity William explained to James that he had made the decision to marry after reading the instructions on the subject in the seventh chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. James looked it up afterwards and was as deeply shocked as ever he had been in his life, not, of course, by what he read there, for he thought it all very sensible, but by William. That any young man of twenty-three should enter grimly into marriage to save himself from sin horrified James. The idea embarrassed him, and he found himself praying to his own God, who was a countryman too, that the boy might prove to be just a hypocrite. However, whatever William's motives were he married Miss Julia, and by the social notions of the times, he condescended.

Miss Julia was petite and plump and angel-faced. Her eyes were blue saucers and her ringlets had a gilt gleam on them. Her hoops were modest, and were usually covered by a good French plaid, and when she raised her skirts to step out of a hired brougham, gay blue and white ringed stockings showed for a second above her tiny black boots.

It is quite possible that William did marry to save himself from

carnal sin, and probably James was wrong and he was right, for against such a battery of suggestiveness few normally sexed young men could have hoped to stand.

All the same Miss Julia was charming. She was shy, but courageous, and when she stood in the chapel aisle where William first saw her, she looked like a dear little tea-cosy. But, and at that time it was a big but in Penton Place, she was the daughter of a greengrocer with several shops in the City. They changed it to 'dry-grocer' when speaking of it, but even that did not make it good.

To James's surprise, William not only failed to object to this social disability, but it appeared to please him since it put him in the position of the one who conferred. James reacted towards the news in much the same way as he had to William's Non-conformity. He consoled himself with the recollection that William was not his son, anyway, and privately envied the young man because it seemed that he could do what James could not. In this, of course, he was simply in the position of the mug at the fair who buys back his own pound note in a fake auction, but he did not see that.

Jinny only cared if Julia was fond of William. By that she meant an utter generosity, which was a tall order. But Julia guessed something of this and did her best to reassure the older woman. Miss Julia was nobody's fool. Behind that baby face was intelligence. She sized up the situation accurately, save that she gave William's social position far more importance than it warranted. She was the daughter of a long line of London "cits." who were sharp and narrow but also as kindly and sensible as had been Dorothy's forefathers, to whom they were after all urban cousins. Julia was far more used to luxury than Jinny when it came to downright creature comforts, but she honestly believed that the next class division above her own was the best in the world, and would make any sacrifice to convince any mortal person she met that she belonged to it. She considered her own family was "trade," and those beneath it entirely inferior. She believed William belonged to the desired social order and was elated to marry him. Indeed, that was the main reason why she did marry him, and if from modern standards it seems an extraordinary thing to have done, then a lot about the mid-Victorian age was extraordinary.

The basic man and woman were engaged in a curious experiment just then, and were getting rich and "going grand," and had yet to find the snags in that programme.

As the Dance of the Years led Miss Julia into the Galantry cotillion, other peculiarities of her temperament began to be observed. There were three ingredients in her recipe which flavoured all the rest: she had brains, she was a snob, and she was jealous.

James always thought about people in the same way as he thought about horses, and he noticed this last as a sign of vice and it disturbed him quite as much as would a sign of stifle trouble. But otherwise she seemed sound enough and certainly had good strong legs, a point on which he was very particular, and then once again after all, William was not his blood.

He gave the young people a cheque, a carved oak sideboard, and a mirror with apples and pomegranates round the frame, and Julia wept because the furniture was not in mahogany, which was a choice wood.

William rented a large, ivy-covered house inconsequentially named "Laurel Lodge," in the decent suburb of Shepherd's Bush. He installed his wife there in a nest of silk plush and silver and crocheted antimacassars, and ever afterwards if he was half an hour late home from the office, he found her in hysterics.

*The Converted World* prospered; it seemed as if nothing could go wrong with it. William profited by the Mellish's experience and kept expenses down. The office consisted of two extremely dirty rooms on the first floor of one of the old houses on the left-hand side of Fleet Street: a large one in front, and a small one at the back. In the front room sat "the staff" on high stools at big double desks, and in the back, sat William and young Mellish.

In those days the Town was the London of popular conception; pea-soup fogs were the rule in winter, and in a yellow gaslit world of adhesive dirt the little paper was made out every week, and the Smike-like boy rushed round to the printers with parts of it every half hour or so on press days.

William was responsible for its success, for it was he who organized the distribution, which was excellent. Young Mellish admired him immensely and did not find him ungenerous.

In the second year of William's marriage, after a child had been born, he took Julia for a holiday abroad, leaving the baby in the care of Jinny who had a nurse and a youngster of her own. In many ways this was a significant step in this history, which never let it be

forgotten, is the story of James and the permutations of James.

William and Julia availed themselves of the services of Mr. Thomas Cook, but only in so far as their tickets were concerned. Julia wept when William proposed "joining the party"; not only did she suspect the clergyman's daughter and the widow with the son and the bride with the young husband, all of making one concerted effort to allure her William, but she felt that travelling in a party like an orphan school outing was not at all what her "dear Pa" would have subjected her to even though he was a mere greengrocer.

William felt rather the same way about it himself, but for economy and convenience there was nothing to beat Mr. Cook's little books of tickets, and it was very convenient to have a courier who could at least speak the language on a foreign quay where there was no one but a pack of jabbering Mossoos to deal with one's somewhat complicated baggage.

In the end they went in typical British fashion with the party and not with the party, and those foreigners who observed them doing this thought they were mad. William and Julia were not much worse than some of the other Britons whose good money let them loose sightseeing over an exhausted warring continent at that time. It was the period when the British got their bad name with other Europeans, the name they have been trying to live down ever since.

William and Julia went to Germany, for of all the Mossoos the Germans were then thought the least impossible. German Mossoos were considered almost human beings, honest, religious, romantic people. But Italian Mossoos were thought to be oleaginous and always dressed absurdly in *evening* black; Spanish Mossoos were no better, and even less lively; Dutch Mossoos spoke English as if they had a cold; Greek Mossoos were dangerous and sly, and French Mossoos worst of all, a frog-like people only happy when surrounded "by a general atmosphere of Mossoo tawdriness and trumpery." At any rate so said Edmund Yeats who invented the generic name, when speaking of the foreigners who came over to England for the Great Exhibition; and if they were like this when on a visit to London, God alone knew what fantasies they might get up to in their own benighted countries.

Some days later William and Julia found themselves seated side by side at a huge but nearly empty table in "The Three Moors" at Augsburg. They had discovered that to eat at the table d'hôte was

the only means of getting a really good meal in this uncouth land, but had still refused to take their main dinner at the proper time, which was two o'clock. Since they were not alone in this conservatism the proprietor had instigated a five o'clock English table d'hôte for which the food was warmed up from the earlier meal. No foreigner ate at the English table if he could help it, so it usually fell out that William and Julia dined at teatime with the distrusted members of their own party, together with a few stragglers who had missed the day's great culinary occasion.

On this particular evening, the rest of the Cook's party was absent, having gone off on some excursion, and the couple were alone save for a German, who ate in the less attractive fashion of the country, holding his fork like an awl and flicking the chopped meat into his mouth with a knife, and one other man. The second stranger was thin and dark and inclined to smallness, so that William and Julia decided immediately that he was French. He was a little older than William, and although he did not stare his quick bright eyes took in the fair young man and his wife and noted every detail of their appearance. No one spoke, even Julia and William passed the salt to each other in silence, and it was not until the end of the meal that any word was exchanged. When it came it was unfortunate.

Having finished his food, the German belched faintly, and taking out his case lit a cigar. He behaved quite naturally, as might any man in a latter-day restaurant, but as the first pale blue stink curled across the table towards Julia, it was not what he said (sir, a lady is present), which incensed the native, for the words were unintelligible to him, nor yet the tone which was at most reproachful. It was the Look, the awful British Look.

William had the face for the Look and he stared at the cigar as if it were something so vulgar, so utterly disgraceful and disgusting that he could scarce credit his eyes. It is probable that no insult gets under the skin quite so successfully as the Look; for the simple reason that its meaning has no limit; it implies the worst the other man can think. William's victim took it very seriously. He sprang to his feet, small-eyed with rage, and let out a stream of threats which amazed the Englishman and made Julia cry. The noise was considerable and waiters came hurrying in, while the proprietor himself hovered anxiously in the doorway. The situation was saved by the dark man who spoke rapidly and deferentially in German.

William could not understand him, but to his indignation he appeared to be apologizing to the vulgarian. He appeared to be successful, for finally the German laughed abruptly, eyed William with insolent amusement, and went out.

The dark man smiled shyly at the English people.

"I'm afraid sir," he said to William, "we strangers have to be very diplomatic over here. These minor officials think themselves tremendous swells."

"Officials?" said William with disgust.

"Yes. He's a Government servant; they're important here."

"God bless my soul!" William was astounded. "I have to thank you, sir. I'm deeply indebted to you. It's their own country, I suppose."

"Yes," said the dark man, "yes."

The incident was considered an introduction, and they fell to talking. The stranger turned out to be a compatriot. He had a curious accent which was slightly uneducated, and there was a friendliness in his manner which was not fashionable. William was interested in him, though, for there was a strong flavour of wealth about him which made a favourable impression on the shrewd young proprietor of *The Converted World*. They exchanged cards, and the man's address in the then elegant Westbourne Terrace, West, convinced William that his impression was correct and that Mr. Walter Raven was 'perfectly all right really.' He told the suspicious Julia so afterwards, and as he reassured her, he looked so much like his grandfather that James would have confused them.

However, the effect that Mr. Walter Raven had on William was trivial to the effect Mr. William Galantry had on Walter Raven. Mr. Raven was an extreme example of a familiar type not then nearly so common as it became later. He was one of those nerve-wracked, over-sensitive, over-fastidious, gifted men, who are a prey to violent likes and dislikes. As soon as William spoke to him he was afraid, not of William but of himself. It is all very well to say this when events which happened later are known, but the instinct was there in the beginning, or so Raven always said. He said afterwards (but he was not himself at the time), that he saw William sitting across the table at "The Three Moors" at Augsburg looking like a yellow nemesis, golden and horrible. He said as soon as he heard William's voice he knew that there would come a time when it would be

unpleasantly familiar. He said—but the things that man did say one way and another! He was always talking, always lying, if one took some people's word for it, always inventing something anyway.

Invention flowed from him. It trickled from his finger tips like dew from the leaves. He would invent a pudding if he had to feed himself for a day, or a game if he had to wait on a railway station, or a new kind of buttonhook if he bought a pair of French boots, or a device for drawing curtains if a lady asked him to shut the window, or an excuse if she asked him where he had been. He was, so he said in moments of expansion, not quite in control of his genius or of himself either, for that matter. The fact was that he had a great working mass of creative power in him, and only a wet brown paper vessel with which to hold it together.

Many people wondered if he was quite sane, but had he not been, then the various crises of his life would have sent him taking up the floor boards or putting straws in his hair, and even when he was drunk as a regiment he never did that.

On this occasion he was playing a little game with himself; he was pretending to be somebody else. He often did this, as, of course, do many other people. His rôle for the mealtime was the wealthy business man looking round Germany for ideas, and this character was not entirely untrue; there were elements of reality in it, but he was not wealthy, had no more idea of business than an artless child of six, and it was he and not the Germans who had the ideas. The confusion was typical of him. Nearly everything he said or did had something to do with the truth, but was never on the bull, never exact. It was very difficult to catch him out and he drove lawyers and precision craftsmen into hysterics.

On this occasion he did not want to talk to William but he could not stop himself, and as he talked he could not help inventing. His account of himself was like an impressionist painting; he hinted, threw in an indeterminate rose-coloured something in one corner, gilded with a single word the figure in the foreground, cast an exciting mist here, or a mysterious but inviting wiggle there. It was a good portrait, for he got away with it, and that in spite of his accent, his revealing slang and his ease, which was not ease at all.

He did not present all this picture in one post prandial go, at the first meeting he was becomingly modest, even reticent, but the three saw a good deal of each other in the next four days, and although he knew perfectly well it was not wise to cement the

acquaintanceship, he conducted William and Julia to the Fuggerei, to The Golden Chamber, to the Fountains, and so on. They even went to Munich together, and gradually his self-portrait grew and he became complete in their minds.

Walter Raven emerged as a pathetic, if very comfortably-off man of the world. William and Julia understood he was secretly brokenhearted by the circumstance of a hopelessly invalid wife. They gathered that his affairs were sufficiently important to necessitate him taking trips to nearly every country on the Continent, and found out that his house was large and lonely and was managed by a dear sister, who was a godsend to him. They also saw plainly that he was brilliant. He had half a dozen languages, his general knowledge was phenomenal, and his air of sophistication was fascinating to William, who was beginning to realize that his own outlook was tending to become narrow.

William and Julia took leave of Mr. Raven with regret. He had interested them and they hoped to see him again.

As Raven saw them leave in the station bus, his mood vanished and he wondered morosely what the hell he had been up to. He made a resolution never, never in his life again to go anywhere near these wealthy, respectable, upper class, honest and religious people; but he knew he would. He liked their lack of any streak of the "bohemian," the absence of mystery surrounding him, their obviously unblemished family record, and their quick acceptance of all the little niceties of life which he had had to learn and to which he clung with all the avidity of the convert. He thought he saw them so clearly, even, while with one part of his mind he decided to avoid them for ever, with another, he was already planning just the right little dinner party to impress their well-bred monied innocence.

A young man who was spending his large patrimony financing a religious paper, which could hardly on the face of it be a profitable concern, touched a chord of wistful admiration in Mr. Raven's heart. It was the kind of thing he liked—wealth, and philanthropy, and nice people.

Meanwhile, in the "Express," William thought shrewdly about Mr. Raven and wondered just what use might be made of him—in a perfectly nice way, of course.



## Chapter Twenty-seven

It was soon after this that Jinny first began to grow uneasy about her William. She was glad he was successful, she forgave him his dignified arrogance, and whenever she saw him she felt young again and forgiven, but she did not like the faintly patronizing note which now came into his tone whenever he spoke to James.

It worried Jinny that William had no idea what he owed to James. She was only thinking of him and she wanted him to have every chance. William was very grand in these days; he was twenty-six or seven now, and things were booming.

*The Converted World* had become so well established that even Willitimson sounded envious when he spoke of it. Julia's bonnets grew more and more expensive every time she called at Penton Place, and one blue and dusty summer's day she arrived in a Victoria of her own, with a liveried boy to drive her, and little Jeffrey, her son, nodding on the seat at her side. William himself was soberly splendid. His honey beard was as glossy as his silk hat, and his beautiful London-made boots. His face had not softened with the surprise of success; he looked keener now, and even colder. He treated his mother like a duchess and James as a bit of a fool.

As far as Penton Place could hear, Laurel Lodge was the scene of much respectable junketing. William and Julia made it clear that they had many interesting friends. They mentioned casually that they often dined at Westbourne Terrace with the Mr. Walter Raven who was so brilliant, and that their circle was large but exclusive. Always there was a very strong flavour of decorum and piety and solidarity in everything they did.

Jinny listened to it all and was very pleased. She was not well in these days, and she was glad that Debby was coming home soon. She was so tired. Her old friend the Rector of the church at the end of the street (he looked on her son's dissenting adventures with horror, but was too kind to say so outright) noticed a great change in her and wondered that James did not.

Jinny herself had no illusions. She felt that at forty-three she was old in body, and she thought it fair. All the same, as she became

weaker, her anxiety about William grew. How could he be just if he did not know? Anyone could have told her that to tell him about Frank was a mad idea, yet it would not be true to convey that weakness and illness made Jinny irresponsible, whereas in fact they made her firm. Jinny was thinking of William's good, or, to be exact, of that little in William which was good. That was all she was worrying about. Perhaps that was the explanation of Jinny and the reason why the Good seem so often the Daft.

As time went on she began to be nagged by her conscience, but it was for this reason and not because she thought she ought to make a confession of guilt. She put it off again and again, but she knew quite well that in the end he must hear the story and see where he stood.

By this time Deborah had returned from the finishing school, and James was observing her and thinking about men and horses, and the astounding mystery of living blood. He reckoned Deborah was about three parts Shulie, but superimposed on the structure were all kinds of new environment-taught attributes and defects. It seemed to James sometimes that Deborah was three parts Shulie and one part Jinny in a glass jar; a jar with fanciful designs moulded on its surface.

The fashion of the day was still aiming to present every girl as the popular notion of the male animal's ideal mother for his children, but there had been modifications in the original design. The gentler virtues were still at a premium, and health had been sacrificed for a clinging, delicate type both of form and mind. Innocence carried to the point of ignorance was still admired, and indeed with many another luxury it had become something of a necessity. So where circumstances made the genuine thing impracticable (when young ladies could not be kept on a lead) a very carefully designed substitute had been introduced.

Brains in women were still decidedly out of fashion; strong mindedness, intelligence, humour, all these possible menaces to male self-confidence, were still anxiously hidden, but were not entirely suppressed, since experience had already shown that a real absence of all of them in any woman was not a good idea. Now the fashionable girl put a great many brains into appearing as if she had none.

At the moment when Deborah returned from Miss Marchbank's Select Seminary for the Education of Young Ladies, the artificial

fashion had touched its peak, perhaps just a month or so after its original object had been achieved, and the middle classes were wrestling with the enormous families which they still felt were at least half the secret of their ascendancy, but which were proving a tremendous strain on the other arm of their programme.

One day James sat in his chair at the head of the table in the dining parlour and looked at Debby. She was a fine, handsome girl, with Shulie's strength and vitality, and much to her despair, James's own dark skin. She had the round black eyes of a gypsy, which were quick and intelligent and slightly naughty-looking; there was Jinny's good temper in her smile, James's own obstinacy in her mouth, and her general appearance suggested sense and ability, but at the moment she was talking unmitigated rubbish. James could hardly follow it, it was so silly and affected.

Apparently Julia recommended rosewater for the eyes, but no rose-water would turn brown eyes blue, would it, Papa? James said he had a very good recipe for turning blue eyes black, and laughed immoderately at his little joke, which Deborah did not see. Noticing that she was not pleasing, she turned with Shulie-like eagerness to something else.

She begged her "dear Mama" to take a rest before "dear Julia" called with her "dear little boy" ("He's not a bit like your side of the family, is he, dear Papa?"). "Dear Mama" looked very peaky, didn't "dear Papa" think so?

James looked at Jinny and knew better even than Deborah that Jinny looked more than "peaky," and that there was nothing to be done about it. The average doctor was still slightly more than a skilful vet., and James had no faith in vets.

He said abruptly that he hoped Mrs. Galantry would always take a rest whenever she felt like one, and Jinny, to change the conversation which was distressing, asked Deborah who had written a letter which had come to her that morning.

Deborah was only too delighted to be asked. She said it was from "dear Madeleine Deveraux," who had been her "dear friend" at "dear Miss Marchbank's," and contained a most exciting account of a very elegant "pic-nic" in the Welsh hills, as well as a most romantic story of wifely devotion in the recent Crimean War. Apparently "dear Madeleine" had been introduced to a charming girl whose Mama had gone over in a friend's yacht to Scutari at the

very height of hostilities, and had only very narrowly escaped the terrible storm which had capsized all the supply vessels, and even battered some of the new ironclads, to find her "dear husband" who had been wounded at Balaclava. However, the most interesting thing of all, and the real reason why "dear Madeleine" had written, was because the girl's name was Ethelinde Galantry, daughter of a Major Benjamin Galantry, and niece of a most distinguished gentleman called Sir William Galantry, down in the West Country. Was it not remarkable, and had "dear Papa" ever heard of such a person?

James was eating walnuts from Farthing Hall with his after-dinner wine at the time, and he took the trouble to skin a segment before he replied. Then he said he did not think he had. He was thinking of the girl with the idiotic name; Ethel was bad enough, that suggested fancy history; but Ethelinde, Good God, what next!

She must be a grandchild of Young Will's, he supposed. Young Will must be dead. Now that Dorothy was gone he never heard any news of the family; not that he wanted to, of course, not that he wanted to. They need not have worried; he had never been an embarrassment to them, now they were not going to be an embarrassment to him, if he could help it.

He came out of his thoughts to find Deborah chattering on. "Dear Madeleine" had hinted that Miss Ethelinde and Madeleine's brother, Robin Deveraux, might be going to make a match of it. "Dear Madeleine" was excited by the prospect, and had hoped that her own "dear Deborah" and Ethelinde might somehow be cousins, although she had to admit that there was no likeness whatever. Gaining no response from this gentle prodding, Debby continued, artless caution very evident in every word she spoke.

Miss Ethelinde did have one cousin at the "pic-nic." He was the youngest of a very large family, born when his father was quite an elderly man. His name was Septimus Galantry; his father was a barrister. Did "dear Papa" know that name by any chance?

Lucius, thought James. Lucius was just the man to call a child Septimus; so his spawn was still spreading its tentacles over the earth, was it?

Debby was too well taught to press her question, but she was looking at him enquiringly, while from the other end of the table she caught a flicker of curiosity in Jinny's face. James was amused

by them. He had never explained his family connections, and did not intend to do so now. The Timsons, who alone might once have demanded an account from him, had not been in a position to do so at the time of his marriage, and all Jinny had ever understood from him was that he came of a second family and that there had been a quarrel.

"No," he said quite truthfully, "no, Miss, I have never heard of Septimus Galantry."

Debby sighed. "He's a most handsome young man," she said. "He writes poetry, Papa."

"No relation," said James.

"My darling, you should not talk enthusiastically about gentlemen you have never met," said Jinny. "It's not pretty."

Debby looked round her with a helplessness which for once was not affectation.

"Oh, Mama," she said. "I don't want to be deceitful. I do know him."

She enjoyed the sensation she caused and was loth to spoil it, but James was looking more like a bull than ever in his life, and she was forced to continue.

"I saw him twice," she said. "We did not speak. I only knew his name to-day when dear Madeleine wrote to tell me. It was so interesting him having the same name as us, you see, Papa. That was why she wrote."

James did not see at all. He looked murderous, and Deborah, who was always a fool in the deportment class, could not remember if this was the moment to break into becoming tears, or the time to show womanly fortitude and a ladylike composure. In her confusion she became natural, and gave James a look which reminded him of his mother, and also of something else which he knew was unpleasant but could not place.

"He was at school in the town," she said. "He saw me in church, and he blushed when I looked at him. Madeleine noticed it, because she looked round afterwards, but we were not allowed to, you know, and I didn't. But she says in her letter that he asked after me, and said that I look like a..."

"A what?" James demanded.

Deborah was sitting up in her chair, and the tight bodice of her plain gown was strained across her full bosom. Her bustle was

plumped up behind her, and the curls on her forehead were tight as a lamb's. She was alarmed, but too pleased and too excited to hide a disgraceful smile. James knew now who else she had called to his mind, and why it had annoyed him. It was Jinny, of course; Jinny when she had been Lizzie Timson as he had first seen her running into the hallway, with her gown dimpled with jack-by-the-hedge.

The recollection annoyed him and he hit the table with his fist.

"Like a what, Miss?"

Deborah drew herself up, exhibiting the same spirit as his own.

"Like a wild moss rose, Papa."

The simile was so inept that old Will Galantry, who was always bestirring himself languidly in James whenever he lost his temper, began to laugh, and a spark of amusement lit in James's hooded eyes and he showed his teeth, which were still as strong if not quite as white as they had ever been.

"Never let me hear of this young imbecile again."

"But, Papa..."

"Never, Miss. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, Papa."

"One more word and I write to Miss Marchbanks to complain of her negligence."

"Papa!" The tears were genuine now, and her eyes looked like licked toffee.

"Oh, be a good girl," said James, "and try not to be a fool."

"Your Papa does not like to be asked about his relations," said Jinny afterwards to her daughter. "You must not bother him."

"But, Mama, I only asked. I only brought it up at dinner so that he could not be cross."

Deborah was very much at home with her mother, and was inclined to bully her much as James did.

"Mama, do you think I could look like a wild moss rose?"

"No, darling," said Jinny. "Better not try."

"Mama, do you think I'm a—well, foolish?" (Julia had taken the whole family to task over their habit of calling each other fools, because he that calleth his brother a fool is in danger of hell-fire. Foolish was permissible though, and Debby, who was always anxious to please, had only just remembered in time.)

"I think you're a muff," said Jinny, with that simplicity which

made all her more serious pronouncements sound like the wisdom from the babes and sucklings. "I think you're a muff. You take after me in that. We are silly, not clever. There is only one thing for us to do and that is to be good. Then God takes care of us."

"But what about Septimus Galantry, Mama?"

"Pray," said Jinny unexpectedly, "pray."

## Chapter Twenty-eight

It began to occur to James, at first slowly and then with gathering speed, that all his children were fools, or very well might be. The two youngest were not yet old enough for him to pass judgment on them, but he feared the worst.

Tom gave him a deal of trouble and did not endear himself to William either. He had charm and great liveliness, and he looked sensationally like Blackberry Smith. There was no holding him at school, and when he went to Timson's the complaints came with the constant irritation of a dripping tap. Some of his escapades had an amoral, gypsy-like flavour which appalled James, and struck terror into the Dorothy who sat within him. (James sometimes wondered as he found himself growing more and more like her, if he had not somehow *inherited* Dorothy.)

There was the incident of the Meerschaum pipe-cleaning factory; that was very unfortunate. It was fashionable to take a great deal of trouble to get one's Meerschaum evenly coloured with tobacco smoke, and some who had made a false beginning were anxious to have theirs cleaned so that they might try again. One night James was confronted by an extremely angry man who said that he had paid Master Tom five guineas in gold for the secret and plant of a pipe-cleaning factory, and after parting with the money had been introduced to a small shed in which stood a bucket of ochre-tinted whitewash and a brush. James reimbursed the over-optimistic speculator, and afterwards had an extremely lively interview with Tom. But a few months later, on returning unexpectedly one night from Farthing Hall where he had left the rest of the family, he discovered his own parlour in a blaze of light. Round his own table was a gathering of ladies and gentlemen from the less distinguished corners of the burlesque stage, making merry with his plate, his wine, and a bird or two from his poulterer.

James recognized acquaintances in some of the roisterers, people he had entertained himself in his time, but elsewhere; he was apoplectic with rage, and Tom came in for serious trouble. James banished him, and put him in lodgings at Greenwich with a retired porter of the Timsons, who had a reputation for a strong hand. Tom had to get from Greenwich to the firm every day, and travelling was



not easy.

About six weeks after this move the son of Tom's landlord, an extremely weary child, presented himself at Penton Place with a heavy rush basket out of which there protruded a goose's head and feet. He explained that it was a present from Tom to his father. James was touched in spite of himself. He knew the gift must have cost money, and he realized that a long period of saving and penitence must have passed before it could have been made. He gave the exhausted messenger a shilling and sent him down to the kitchen to be fed, while he himself carried the present in triumph to Jinny to show her that he had been right and she wrong when she had begged him in vain to keep Tom at home.

All this might have been very satisfactory, but as James set the basket down one of the big yellow feet fell out on the carpet and the fraud was discovered. The parcel contained a couple of bricks wrapped in hay, with the bird's head and feet arranged as a trimming. Worse still, after James had exhausted his rage on the messenger, it transpired that the boy had been deceived also and that he had lugged the heavy bundle on foot all the way from Greenwich in perfect innocence. He was as disappointed as James, and nearly as angry, and as Mr. Galantry listened to his bellowing, it dawned upon him that in upbraiding the child he had probably been obliging his son, who had possibly very good private reasons for wishing his landlord's offspring a really skilled dressing down at the hands of an expert.

James consigned Tom to perdition, and for a time at least washed his hands of him.

William was even more unfortunate in his relations with the black sheep.

After the party episode, when Tom was about eighteen, William decided that here was a soul whose reclamation would benefit everybody, both celestial and terrestrial. He and Julia, therefore, set to work, and Tom was attended to.

It would hardly be untrue to say that a small mission was sent to Tom, but the whole thing was a dreadful disaster. Tom was stony ground, and the story of that season's growing was distressing and ought to have been a serious lesson to William.

At first Tom was a great success with the Brotherhood, and in six months was a 'Good Young Man' himself. And then one day he went

out with others to reclaim certain ladies of whom Jinny had never heard, and Debby, the modern, only whispered. He returned after several days, apologetic but remarkably cheerful, and volunteered the frightful information that they had converted him. William felt himself disgraced, the other Good Young Men were horrified, and the Leader flung Tom into the street with his own hands, his mild eyes frozen with loathing and disgust. Even Tom was frightened of him, for it occurred to him at the time that the great man might, in that mood, have consigned him there and then to the Chapel stove without waiting for matters to take their more normal course.

James was worried about Tom. To be honest it was his foolishness rather than his wildness which upset him most. Never in all his life, he felt, had he met such a fool.

Meanwhile Deborah took on more and more of her mother's household duties, and James, who was very much the master of his domestic affairs, found her in need of Dorothy's training. She, too, was a fool, he thought, but of an even more unusual kind. The division between the things she had been taught, and the person she was stood out like seams sewn in bright cottons. In matters in which she had been taught to be tidy, she was tidy. She folded her clothes, arranged her chest of drawers, and her stockings which sometimes showed now that skirts were becoming so tight were never undarned. But she had no notion whatever of tidying a room.

There were times when she so reminded James of Shulie that he could have boxed her ears for no other reason. In manner, it was the same. She had learned to come into a room and to sit down at a piano, and she could do that with grace and elegance, but she was not nearly so good at sitting down at a tea-table.

Sometimes it seemed to the exasperated James that she really was Shulie; Shulie got at, and seen to, and put through the hoop. But he knew that was not true, for there was Jinny there too. Debby had Jinny's remarkable patience, and her never-failing interest in people. The servants told Debby things about themselves and their aspirations which they did not tell to other people, and she was as interested in them and expected other people to be as interested too, which annoyed James, as if they had been the troubles of their own families.

If Boxer, the housemaid, had a quarrel with her beau, Debby wept with her. If Harris, the cook, heard her brother was out of gaol again, Debby went about with a hunted look for days.

Sometimes James saw himself in Debby. She was strong as he was, and her phenomenal physical force sat very oddly with the whimsy airs, affected laughs, and coy tilts of the head, each of which she had studied so painfully under Miss Marchbanks.

She had also his obstinacy and his spirit, too, when she needed it. They made rum partners for Miss Marchbanks' bric-a-brac.

One day when she was reading to him up in his room, for nowadays he was very nearly as gouty as ever old Jed had been, he let fly at her and told her that her silliness was beyond bearing. He said she was mistaken in thinking herself a muff, for she was really an imbecile and he dreaded to think what might become of her when he died. A much more sophisticated young woman of the day might have been expected to break into tears at less violent criticism, but to his surprise Debby drew herself up and surveyed him with flashing black eyes, which delighted him. What she said, though, was devastating, and spoilt everything. "A gentleman," said Debby, "would ne'er insult me—none other can."

"Good God!" said James.

Debby laughed with Shulie-like pleasure at her success, and presently James laughed too, if not for the same reason, and she continued to read *The Times* newspaper aloud to him about the far-away Franco-Prussian war. She had been taught to read and could do it very well, and as her clear young voice went easily on James allowed his mind to wander from Sedan to matters more near him.

His children were fools. Tom and Debby were sensational fools. If it were not for William, who had some real brains, James would have had cause to be very worried indeed about the future of his family. It struck him with great force that he had been right; the instinct which had made him do such a very unconventional thing when Mr. Timson had approached him, had been wise. It was justified, indeed, at this distance it seemed almost providential. For a moment he wondered if it was providential, if there was some broad outlined scheme to which a man conformed whether he would or no. It was a repellent idea, and he did not think it was true, not quite true. All the same, it certainly was a mercy that William did exist; it was a mercy in view of everything that Edwin Castor had come to visit Groats, that James had admired him, even that Jinny had been led astray.

It was all very odd, very interesting, slightly dispiriting; he

wished he were a younger man, he wished ...

Phœbe cut into his thoughts as she did often in these days. Her arrival in his waking mind was always curious; she came suddenly, not vaguely and sadly as do lost loves as a rule, but definitely and vividly and never with regret. There was no telling in what mood he would find her or she him. She was clear and sharp always as if he had seen her yesterday. To-day she was as he had last seen her in a yellow gown to match her hair, and he saw her walking across the room with that famous swagger of hers.

Debby's voice was swinging on, and the ponderous sentences from the leader rolled out of her mouth like platoons on the march. Above them he could hear Phœbe's voice quite distinctly. At first he could not tell what she was saying, and then when he did hear the words, they startled him.

"I could have had children, James," said Phœbe. "I could have had children. Didn't you want my children?"

Old as he was James felt a chill as boys do in love.

"No," he said angrily in his mind, to the other half of it which was Phœbe's. "No, I did right. Look what happened. I did right. Jinny's a good girl, a dear girl."

"Yes," said Phœbe. "Yes, indeed, James. We might have had her as a daughter."

"Most unlikely, in fact impossible," said James.

"We should not have had fools, darling, anyway," said Phœbe.

She was not speaking from the grave, of course, but only in James's mind, where one of her at least had been living more or less quietly ever since they parted.

"Darling, suppose that the part of Deborah which is not like you were like me."

James put Phœbe and the suggestion out of his mind, or at least he attempted to do so. The idea was indelicate, profitless and irritating. All the same he could not help picturing Deborah half Phœbe; Deborah with Phœbe's feel for the meaning of the moment; Deborah with her kittenishness intelligence; Deborah gay.

There was no question but that she would be less trouble to him then, and more delight; but—and here he knew he was on mysterious ground—would she be better, would she be safer, would she carry his own survival so well? Jinny had given Deborah something strange, something quite outside James's experience. He

did not know what it was, but it was something that made her very firm on her ground, indefatigable and unconquerable.

“Are you asleep, dear Papa?” enquired Deborah at this point.

“Only partially,” said James with unconscious Sultanry. “Go on.”

Debby continued obediently. “An interesting echo of the inauguration of the Luther Memorial,” she began, and again the sweeping sentences took up their soporific rhythm.

“No child of yours would do that for me,” said James to the Phoebe in his head.

“I hope not, poor wretches,” she said laughing, adding as her voice changed, “only James, James ...”

He let his head fall on his chest and closed his eyes.

“Oh my girl, I know, I know,” he said. “Be still.”

He listened to a sentence or so of the ‘interesting echo’ and let his mind wander back to the year when he had heard from an acquaintance, Toole, as a matter of fact, that Phoebe had died. It had upset him. It was the year of Jinny’s second child and there had been rain and tears and fruitlessness everywhere.

He had gone down to Bedfordshire to see Phoebe’s grave, a silly pilgrimage if ever there was one, and had put up his horse at the village inn and walked up the hill to the churchyard in the rain. There he had been infuriated to find her beneath a brand new black marble catafalque, picked out with gold and very magnificent. Old Sir Robin had outlived her, just as he, James, was going to outlive poor Jinny if he did not hurry. The sight of Phoebe’s name amid the pomp, the little lawn chained round, the carefully tended flowers, the gravel and the gilt, removed her from him and rubbed it in that she was not his property. He would have come away robbed had she not stirred in his mind and laid a cheek against his, so familiarly, that he could almost feel it.

“There should have been a little mound, James,” she said declaiming. “A pauper’s patch trimmed out with flowers for you my love to pick and mingle with your tears.” And then in her own laughter: “That would have been proper, James, you’d have liked that.”

“Nonsense,” he had said to her then, highly ruffled. “Nonsense.”

“Oh liar,” said Phoebe, “wicked old liar, James. Come away!”

In the end they had both been amused, and the ostler at the inn had thought how strange it was that the dark gentleman should

walk up alone to the churchyard with a face as long as a fiddle, and come back grinning like a ploughboy at a fair. James remembered his expression to this day as he sat with half an ear on Debby, and he smiled again.

A minute or two later when she looked up he really was asleep.

## *Chapter Twenty-nine*

When Jinny knew that she was going to die so young, she accepted the fact without an emotional upheaval, although her life was very happy. She knew the next thing to look forward to as she once had looked forward to the spring holiday, or Christmas, would be dying. She accepted that as one accepts to-morrow; mysterious, not unhopeful, sure to come. Hers was the serenity which is as like apathy as life is like death.

Her old friend, the Rector from down the road, used to say with that affectionate sadness at innocence which became so common among the more intelligent churchmen later, that he envied her her faith, and in that he was sincere. It was a difficult time just then for the faithful who happened to be also intellectual, and his own doubts and apprehensions were many. Privately he often wondered what exactly dear little Mrs. Galantry did believe, and how much of it his own excellent brain would be compelled to question if he knew her secret.

So he never quizzed her too closely and never learnt. Actually, Jinny's faith, like everything else about her, was simple. It depended on accurate feeling first, and direct thinking afterwards. She was entirely human herself and knew exactly what that condition entailed; that was the humility she brought to her reading, and after that she believed what she was told.

She believed in a Son of Man who was also the Son of God; in a Divine Jesus, whose Mother yet made Him turn the water into wine so that a party should not be spoiled; and in a Man who was God who loved and teased and built His Church upon the chuckle-headed Saint Peter, because of them all he was the silliest, the most impetuous, the most like lesser men. She believed implicitly that this Being would not let her down and that she would not really die any more than He had done. In fact, Jinny put her faith in the humanity of God; that was her secret and her strength. She realized that as long as she remained true she would get by. With the nettle would come the dock leaf, with the terror would come the courage.

To her family her approaching death was tragedy but not annihilating disaster. Death in comparative youth was not unusual

in those days, it was a familiar thing, a commonplace; every family expected a death or two and knew how to meet them.

In the last few months before she died she used to lie in the long chair by the window in the drawing-room most of the time, although until she was very weak she could sometimes play the piano. James used to like to hear her from his room next door; he seldom came in to her, but he used to sit in his own room and listen.

Debby was a most faithful, if somewhat unskilled nurse to her mother, but the waiting Jinny's most constant companion at this period was William's only son, little Jeff. Jinny's own youngsters were at boarding school, for James was a great believer in sending his children out from under his feet. But Jeff was staying with his grandparents because Julia was having yet another of her girl babies. Debby looked after him, and he adored her, but most of his day he spent with Jinny. The two had much in common. Jeff looked like William in spite of his curls, which Julia insisted on him keeping until he was far too old for them, but his expression was Jinny's own. He was so good and quiet that the servants were always wondering if he was going to live, and he loved best to draw on scraps of paper. When James gave him a box of very good crayons he was delighted, and with these he showed the astonished James something he had never noticed before, which was that there was colour in shadows. Most of it was dark colour to be sure, but there was plenty of it.

Jeff pointed out to his grandfather the blue under the piano, and the red and green in the dark hole when a door opened in the house across the street. James saw Jeff's discovery as a sign of artistic talent. It was something new in the family and he wondered regretfully if it came from Julia. He made up his mind that the boy was to be a Royal Academician and to paint red horses coming through gateways, and he was disappointed when William told him stiffly that the child was intended for the Ministry.

James thought it a great pity, and spent quite a time thinking sadly of the artist in Jeffrey which was doomed to be sacrificed. However, in that he was altogether wrong as it happened; there was not much of the true artist in little Jeff and his discovery of the colour in the shadows was made with the help of that attribute which he had had from William, the curious gift of seeing how a thing was done. He simply saw how the shadows were made, that



was all, and as to being sacrificed—there was a lot nobody knew about Jeffrey at that time.

Jinny and Jeffrey had more than their expressions in common. For one thing, they both had an enormous respect for sin. The thing that most worried Jeffrey in his childhood was the enormous possibility he saw in life of sinning by mistake. Nobody but Jinny seemed to appreciate the full anxiety this caused him, but she did, and she sympathized. Often they sinned together, inasmuch as they both said things they thought were true only to find out afterwards that they were lies, and they both got laughed at when they explained. The laughter exasperated Jeffrey, who saw it as unreasonable. But Jinny did not mind.

Jeff was going to be far more clever than Jinny; she realized that, and told Debby that she did so hope his brains would not make life too difficult for him, which in a way they did, of course. He was passionate, too, as God knew she had been, and he had his mother's jealousy.

Jinny loved him, yet practically the last thing she did before she died was to do him harm. She pointed out to Jeffrey that jealousy was a peculiarly degrading thing, a cancer in one's heart instead of in one's stomach. Jeff was at the age of the clear eye, and he saw the similarity at once. His jealousy became a physical thing to him, shameful too, like an insanitary habit. But to diagnose is not to cure, and so with him jealousy became a hidden evil, torturing in its secrecy.

The days passed slowly for Jinny. William came often to see her, but his visits were brief. He was very much the man of affairs now, and enjoyed himself because he was working. He had a natural gift for the commodity, *The Converted World*, was selling, and when he walked down the road a full foot taller than most people, his hat glistening and his honey beard catching every feminine eye, he felt he was specially blessed. It was a full-time job though, and he was inclined to rush in, kiss his mother, and be off again.

Jinny did not worry about this. She knew that if the secret she wanted to tell him was to be told, the opportunity would surely come. When it came she could choose whether to speak or be silent, but the chance to do either would inevitably be given her. The road would turn that way.

Inexorably the time of her going approached. When it came to

dying, when the actual moment came close, it was not easy for her, despite her faith and its serenity. Her contemporaries, who were for ever knocking together stucco effigies of granite truths in their great haste, were constantly saying "Thy Will be done" about death, and for those who were not too nearly concerned the attitude was not only serviceable but easy. Stucco sufficed that little strain. For Jinny, who was within a hair's breadth of dying, it was not so simple even for the granite. Over and over again she was forced to leave the floodlit adult half of the Bible for the primitive aid of the ancient poets. It was the lively animal in her who was dying, and its cry of fear was in her dry, hot mouth more than once in the long nights.

*"... Rebuke me not in Thine anger,  
Neither chasteneth me in Thy hot displeasure.  
Have mercy on me, for I am weak.  
Heal me; for my bones are sore vexed.  
My soul is also vexed."*

And again, its agony her agony, its desperation her own:

*"... How long?  
Return. Deliver my soul:  
O save me for Thy Mercy's sake!"*

Jinny never had to worry about a sign from her God, signs came in every hour of her life, but she was very weak and in great discomfort when at last the opportunity was presented to her, as she had assumed it would be, and she was alone with William in the autumn dusk one Sunday while the others were downstairs. She was in her bedroom, and the brass knobs at the foot of the bed caught the last of the light.

William was sitting by the window, and she could just see him there, looking like a woodcut of himself. Jinny prayed briefly that this might be the right step in her last figure, and then began her statement abruptly, telling William baldly about Frank.

She was so concerned to impress upon her son how much he owed to James that she used no art at all in telling the story, and for a moment he did not understand her. It is only by accident that anyone ever conveys the truth without art, and this was not a lucky occasion. When she had been speaking for some time William got up and crossed towards the bed.

"Mother, you don't mean this, do you?" he demanded.

"Yes, I do, Will." Jinny sounded faint but resolute. "It was so very good of James. Always remember that. It was so very good of him."

William was scandalized but curious; alarmed but excited. He asked startled questions. Jinny answered him. She told the story as she had seen it, and at that distance it was still her love she best remembered; nothing had harmed it, in spite of everything it was very sweet to her still.

William had known passion himself, but not innocence with it, and he was shocked. It was probably that emotional jolt which finally convinced him.

Jinny told him no more than the truth, but even while she was telling it to him he was translating it into the language of his own mind and giving it his own complexion, tricking it out in a sophistication it had never had. Jinny had never known James's real reason for fathering Edwin Castor's grandson, and she had always attributed it to kindness, which was the thing she best understood. William rejected this explanation and chose his own god to have received the sacrifice. He assumed at once and without question that James had done it for money. It made everything very clear to him.

Once before the story had been subjected to the same sort of misconstruction. Edwin Castor had heard it from Alfred Timson, and had translated it to meet his own view, and now his grandson coming upon it from the other end, altered it yet again.

William gave his mother more consideration than his grandfather had done, but he heard her story with exactly the same sort of mind. When Jinny had finished her confession she did not ask William's forgiveness, an omission which surprised him, although he was quite prepared to give it to her. But instead she took his hand in her heavily veined one and held it fast.

"So never forget," she said painfully, "you and I, my dear Will, owe so much to James."

Then she turned away from him and strove to find a cooler part of the pillow for her cheek.

She died very early the next morning when there was nobody with her but poor Debby, who was asleep on her low chair with her dark, crisp Shulie-curls nodding against the soft mountain of the

bed.

William was ravished by the story he had heard. He was both despoiled and exalted by it; it made his mind work very fast. In one way he felt closer to Jinny than ever before, but in another he knew himself to be more free and therefore more powerful than ever in his life. Best of all, he felt that at last he was explained; it was not an explanation he could give to anyone else. He did not belong to a class or an age in which bastardy in any circumstances could possibly be considered an asset. But yet he was not regretful. He felt that the facts gave him an excuse for the superior and ruthless attitude he sometimes found himself adopting, not only towards his family, but to the rest of the world.

All through the days before Jinny's funeral, and even when he was in the first carriage with James and Tom, and they all sat close together with their black-gloved hands on their knees, his mind was busy clothing the details he had been given.

Edwin Castor was dead, but he had been a brilliant man. His career was well known, even William had heard of him. He had been, as important people go, considerably important. William did not wish to be associated with him openly, and wild horses would not have dragged him to seek out his father, but he was very satisfied to have a distinguished grandfather behind him. The matter was private and personal, but remarkably powerful in its effect upon him.

In his own mind he saw the story quite plainly. He had no doubt that James had been an impoverished adventurer who had turned up at the Timsons at precisely the right moment. Clearly old Timson had paid very handsomely for the favour he had required. William assumed that all James's money had come from that source.

To William's inner vision, which was almost as limited as his grandfather's had been, there was absolutely no other explanation which could conceivably cover the facts. He took James's secrecy about his background to be a courtesy to the Timson family's susceptibilities, and he took Jinny's warning that he must be grateful to James as yet another instance of her sweet unworldliness.

He saw himself as James's benefactor; James should be grateful to him. Thinking it over, he realized that James's attitude towards himself had not been that of a man bringing up his wife's

illegitimate child, so he thought he probably was very grateful. The notion that James might have refused any consideration from Alfred Timson, and had done what he did do for an entirely different, and to him far more important reason never entered William's magnificent head. As he saw it, it was as obvious as the sun. He was the princeling, and all the others, Tom, Debby and the rest, only existed as a by-product to himself.

At the gathering after the funeral he looked round the crowded parlours and caught sight of himself in a wall mirror. Had he needed any convincing of the truth of the story, that glimpse would have reassured him. He rose high above the others, and his gold hair glowed against their black; whereas their faces were swarthy and rustic and lively, his was grave, aristocratic and even noble.

William looked away. There was no self-depreciation in the fashionable point of view at that time, and he was very much a man of his period. He remembered with a simplicity which to-day seems naïve, that a man with a profession like his own was improved by humility, and so, looking at the family, he felt consciously magnanimous and kindly towards them.

Debby's eyes were puffed with weeping, and Tom looked white and different, with the fires of mischief dead in him. James looked older. He had settled down within himself and his skin had rumpled.

From his superior height William was sorry for them all, but he felt his own grief for Jinny should be an immeasurably higher thing than theirs.

When the funeral was over, James took William up to his own parlour and sat him down while he unlocked his bureau. Then he told him that Jinny had one hundred and fifty pounds a year settled upon her by her father at the time of her marriage, and that he proposed to turn the securities over to William at once. It was a curious interview. James was not a man who enjoyed parting with money in the ordinary way, but he wanted to get rid of this money. It was all he had permitted Alfred Timson to give his daughter, and all through the years every halfpenny of it had been spent most religiously either on Jinny herself or on William.

James's reasons were elementary. He had not married Jinny for money or love, but for an ideal—a peculiar ideal certainly, mischosen maybe, but an ideal none the less—and he did not want

there to be any muddle in his own or the Almighty's mind about that. Once this money was back in its proper place he felt that the incident would be closed. James considered that he had sacrificed and achieved. Now he was a decent, independent, widowed gentleman with a long residence in one respectable place behind him, and a clever aristocratically-bred son to carry on his name.

Because of the circumstances his blood would be perpetuated otherwise; Debby must see to that, or else the two younger boys. His achievement was a patched business, a cracked vase of a structure, but in view of everything it was not too bad. In fact, when he looked at it and considered all the difficulties, he felt it was a damned miraculous performance. Had it not been for Phœbe and for a new, indefinable misgiving, he thought he should feel that he had cause to be very satisfied.

He was thinking this when he got out the documents and handed them to William. Meanwhile, that young man was seeing James for the first time as someone who was not his father. He saw a curious-looking person. James was still powerful, still mighty in the shoulders, but his hips had fallen away and his big head had sunk into his neck, giving him a top-heavy appearance. His black clothes diminished his size still further, and his luxuriant white wig darkened his thick eyebrows and the hollows of his hooded eyes.

William wondered where on earth he had come from originally.

James was slightly embarrassed when he handed over the money; a little anxious to hide his satisfaction. William, who was very used to business interviews, noticed it at once and thought he understood. The old man was cheating him, of course; he assumed he was keeping the greater part for the others and was a little ashamed of it. In his present mood William was inclined to forgive James. Poor old fellow, it was very human.

He took the securities gracefully, and James cocked an eye at him. The boy seemed to be taking the cash as if he had a right to it. James thought it a little surly in him not to protest; a long hidden trace of Shulie's anxiety to try to please when rebuffed stirred in him.

"When I go," he said, "you'll have to look after your sister and the boys. They're a pack of almighty fools, I'm afraid."

William looked at James and his blue eyes were very cold.

"You can rely on me to be absolutely just, sir," he said. He

looked so like Edwin Castor when he spoke that he made James feel quite uncomfortable.

## *Chapter Thirty*

One day Willitimson called in at "The Converted World" office, and feeling himself at a disadvantage in the face of so much fashionable Bible knowledge, tried innocently to compete. He startled William by observing that one of the best epitaphs he had ever heard had been placed on the tombstone of an old servant by James Galantry. Willitimson said that carved on the headstone of the grave of a certain Dorothy Holding in the churchyard at Sedgford were the words: "She doeth him good and not evil all the days of her life."

On the other side of the office Clemmie Johns looked up to say, "Prov. thirty-one, twelve," but for once William did not notice him. He had heard of Dorothy vaguely, but had never had her explained, for James did not explain his affairs. But now with his new knowledge William thought himself enlightened.

The genuine feeling in the quotation impressed him, as did the account of the tombstone which sounded expensive for the careful James, and he remembered that James had brought several pieces of furniture into the house at Penton Place when the old woman had died. An explanation occurred to him immediately: Dorothy Holding must have been James's mother, of course. He supposed that she had been a well-valued servant somewhere, perhaps too well valued, who had been left something in somebody's will. He would have been astounded had it been put to him that he had an evil mind, he merely adopted the explanation as the probable truth. It was the sort of history which seemed to him to be both reasonable and likely. It was not a matter he wished to examine, and he did not consider the dates, which might have enlightened him. Nor, of course, did he tackle James; it was a point of purely academic interest as far as he was concerned. He was beginning to think of James as a sort of Saint Joseph in his own story, a useful but not particularly interesting figure.

The personal isolationism of William was quite extraordinary. Some people called it selfishness, but there was a good deal more to it than that. William saw himself as something quite apart, something as exclusive and alone as his own high walled house.

The incident probably explained why he was so surprised when



he heard that a relation of James's, introducing himself as Septimus Galantry, had called at Penton Place. James had been confined to his room at the time, and had not seen him, but Debby had. William was unreasonably angry; without a modicum of enquiry or any evidence whatever, he assumed that the man was an imposter come to look for money. He could not interfere but he was against the man, and this was unlike William, who was usually prepared to see absolutely anybody in case they might prove of some use to him.

It was interesting that Debby should have seen Septimus alone when he called first, for it was probably the one stroke of luck she ever had in her life. James and the Dorothy within him were doing their best with Debby in these days, but they had their hands full.

Julia, who was jealous of her, of her school training, of her manners and of her gentleness, told William quite sincerely that she thought the poor girl was simple-minded. She also said that she looked ridiculous in the quilted skirt and pork pie hat which James had bought her at Jay's. This in all fairness to Julia was absolutely true, but most women were looking a little odd that year, and Debby was not alone.

The poor girl did not even notice Julia's resentment. She had a trusting, affable nature, and she put the pork pie plumb on the top of her head, and had to have it rearranged by Boxer, or even the impatient James himself, trying to remember how it had appeared in the shop. Her excuse was that she had been told it was vain to look in the glass, as she had by someone who had underestimated her literal-mindedness. It was a fact that she was the most fearful fool, but the house was a dead fire whenever she was out of it; she would help anybody to do anything, she never minded the most menial or unpleasant work so long as it was for someone, and little Jeff regarded her as a sort of Mother Nature only on his side. Anyone could reward her completely with gratitude, real or feigned; she was not choosy and not acute. Like Jinny, she gave away all she had; and, like James, she never threw anything away.

When one thinks what happened to her later, and how Julia used to patronize her and give her old clothes, and what was in fact a day's charring for her food alone, it is staggering that in the end the two women should have loved each other, and that it should have been Deborah who tended Julia when she was old and drivelling, and should have soothed her when she shrank from the eternal darkness, and should have closed her eyes.

But this is premature. It is only excusable here to point out that Debby's qualities were real qualities, and were proved so. In Debby, even her faults combined to make her virtues strong; she was as obstinate as James, or as a mule, and she was always getting into such trouble that she clung to being good as a drunken man clings to a railing. Also, she had Jinny's gift—the courage to endure, and she needed that, as it turned out.

From what Debby said afterwards, her interview with Septimus must have had points of interest. When Boxer told her that the master wished her to see the gentleman who was waiting in the drawing-room, the good-natured girl also suggested that she should pin up the curl which was hanging over one of her ears. She also offered to fasten Debby's dress between the shoulder blades where it gaped, and in the end she went up looking more or less tidy.

A tall, fine-boned man of thirty-one or two turned from the window when she went into the drawing-room. He was not a schoolboy, and not the youngster who had blushed when Debby looked at him in church. The mistake was typical of Debby. She had noticed the wrong man, had eyed the pupil and not the master, who sat beside him. Miss Deveraux, who was much more fly, had not been so deceived.

If Septimus was not the fair-skinned, downy adolescent whose innocent stare had attracted Debby, he was by no means unhandsome. He was very much a Galantry. There was the faint air of weariness in his face, the same slenderness, and the same heavy lids and over-wise eyes. He was a self-possessed, disillusioned man, who was augmenting his patrimony by teaching in a fashionable school and was managing to live a comfortable, bachelor life which was yet not altogether satisfying. He wrote a little light verse of a sophisticated type, not then in favour, and hearing from Miss Deveraux that these relatives of his were connected with publishing, he had considered it an excuse to look them up.

His main reason for calling, however, was to see more of Debby. He had said she reminded him of a wild moss rose. She did. James had not considered wild moss roses; Septimus had. The moss rose is not the dog rose; it is an untidy, cabbagey little bloom, pink and woolly and innocent, and very sweet smelling.

Septimus had heard his father, Lucius Galantry, tell the story of James, and to him it had appeared romantic. Hence the exciting word "wild" in his description.

When Debby came in to the drawing-room at Penton Place she was just exactly as he had imagined her. The curl fell down again just as she got in to the room, and a flicker of amusement passed under his hooded lids. Debby did not see it.

For all she knew he might have been the boy she had expected. Debby did not raise her eyes.

Miss Malagrowth, the deportment instructress at Miss Marchbanks', had one edict which she drilled into her pupils with the same determination with which a sergeant insists that no man will forget his rifle. She said: "No nice young lady ever raises her eyes above a gentleman's knees when she is first introduced to him."

Debby learned her lesson painfully, but once there the habit stayed. She never did. She lived to be a hundred, and she never did. On this occasion she thought that Mr. Galantry had lovely boots.

Septimus was compelled to do all the work, and he was delighted. He introduced himself as her cousin, and said that he had brought messages of goodwill from Lucius, who was growing very old. Deborah hardly heard what he said; she only thought he had a very attractive voice.

She spoke her formal piece about her "dear Papa" being too unwell to receive him, and then stood so still and so shy, her face so pink and her lashes so black on her cheek, that Septimus, who was not quite so dashing in the ordinary way, became possessed of unusual boldness.

"Is it permitted for cousins to kiss?" he enquired, his eyes dancing.

Miss Deborah Galantry was startled out of her wits, but once again Miss Malagrowth came to her rescue.

"My hand," said Debby, thrusting out a brown fist with more determination than grace.

Delighted astonishment passed over Mr. Galantry's sophisticated face. He crowed. There was no other word in Debby's vocabulary for that peculiar, triumphant sound, which was only half a laugh. He bent over her hand charmingly and said something she did not quite catch, but it sounded like "sweet."

Having got the introductions over, Debby raised her bright, black eyes and was momentarily nonplussed to see a complete stranger. Septimus straightened himself to find her staring at him.

"That's better," he said. "What's the matter, cousin? Am I not at all what you expected?"

"Oh, much better," said Debby, involuntarily advancing out of her own safe ground away from Miss Malagrowth, only to retract immediately. "Please be seated, sir—I mean cousin," she said. "I trust you do not find the weather too warm."

It was midwinter and freezing, but the word had slipped out. It was the sort of silly mistake she was always making in class, and weariness came over her. It was no good; she was going to muffle it.

Septimus was reading her thoughts; not a difficult proceeding, for Debby had the most expressive face which lit up and clouded every other minute.

"Suppose you sit down, too," he suggested. "Now tell me, have you seen Miss Deveraux lately?"

"No," said Debby, adding frankly, "Papa does not wish it." She felt this was a dangerous statement to leave floating in the air, and yet was at a loss to explain it. The complicated machinery for polite conversation spread out in front of her like a tray of ivory bobbins, all of which she was expected to use at once. To her relief he nodded as if she had told him everything, and his eyes, which were beginning to fascinate her because they were so like her father's, yet much more experienced although he was younger, rested on her face.

"Wealthy and fashionable friends can be a responsibility, and not greatly entertaining. Don't worry, Deborah," he said.

She could have taken it that she was neither wealthy or fashionable, but he did not mean that, and she knew he did not. He was very easy to talk to, almost an old friend.

Unfortunately they talked too long, and Boxer appeared to say that the master was enquiring for his daughter. This was serious. Septimus realized what a gaffe it was quicker even than Debby, and he made most sincere apologies. Debby was alarmed by James, but even more alarmed to lose Septimus. She made the prescribed parting speech.

"It has been most agreeable of you to call. I will inform my father of all your kind enquiries." But added on her own account: "Oh, cousin, I do so hope you will come again."

Septimus took her hand and pressed it. As old Galantry had felt the racing life in Shulie running through his arm, when he walked

with it across her shoulder in the copse behind Jason's house, so Septimus was aware of something unusual which was also something he needed very badly, when he first touched Debby, but the power was diluted in this generation, and the sensation was far less extreme. He had no idea what it was.

He guessed that he might very easily fall in love with her; he thought she was the dearest little muff, not too little, either, but strong and very healthy, and not too mysterious for comfort.

Debby felt he was romance miraculously made easy and without the intense embarrassment she usually associated with it. She felt bereft when he went away, and was nearly in tears she was so lonely, when she trotted up to James.

James said that three-quarters of an hour was a fantastic time for a first call, and asked her what the devil she thought she had been up to. All the same, he was pleased by the visit. Even as late as his middle age, any gesture from the first family would have found him disinterested, but that time had passed, and he had nearly forgotten the details which had led up to his flight to "The Golden Boar."

He sat thinking of Lucius and Young Will with something of the same affection he usually reserved for Groats and Dorothy and his father. He could not remember much about them except, absurdly enough, Young Will's very high waisted white breeches as he had sat in the candle-light talking about schools. It seemed a very long time ago.

James was not at all well. He had had a ridiculous accident. It was the kind of mishap which often took off a very healthy old dog, he reflected, and the thought brought out his little grunting laugh. He had had a fight.

It had happened on the first cold day of the autumn, about dusk. By this time the Walworth Road was fast losing its early respectability, and as he turned out of the main thoroughfare into the gloom of a side street a figure had snatched at the watch chain just visible between the swinging sides of his coat. The incident had happened very quickly. James whipped up his heavy ash plant and brought it down so savagely on the retreating arm, and with such tremendous strength behind the blow that the larger bone was fractured at the wrist. It was a tremendous swipe. The muscles of James's back and shoulders were still mighty, and he still had no idea of their power. Also he was very angry. The watch was the one

which he had bought to replace that which he had given to Blackberry. It had cost him fifty pounds, and he heard it drop on to the bricks of the road. In his rage he dived at the man, caught him round the hips just as he was darting away, and brought him down on the stones. He kicked James in the thigh, but the old man held on grimly until the crowd came up.

At the police station James had had his first heart attack. The excruciating pain in his chest astonished as well as frightened him, and the faintness which was the first he had ever known in his life, which followed it, warned him that the damage was serious.

The police had been very sympathetic, and the Charge Sergeant, who had seen the punishment done to the thief, could not resist a word of congratulation.

“That was a werry fine blow, sir,” he said. “You’re a remarkably powerful man, if I may say so. Werry phenomenally strong, ain’t you?”

James felt the enquiry was an impertinence, but he recognized the compliment.

“Yes,” he said. “I’ve been very strong all my life.”

“Never done nothing wiv it, sir?” enquired the Sergeant, who appeared to be fascinated.

“No,” said James, thinking how ill he felt. “No, of course not.”

But on the way home in the shaky cab it occurred to him that there was no “of course” about it. It had been an asset which had not fitted into his scheme of things.

In his unnerved state, a fear which was part superstition took hold of him, and he thought there might well be something very wrong indeed about that. He was still considering it when they helped him out and got him to bed.

He was up again in a couple of days, but everyone could see the change in him, while he suffered from no delusion.

With no grace at all he submitted to an examination by the doctor who had attended Jinny. It was a depressing business, and James’s remark that the “vet.” didn’t seem to think he was “worth his fodder” was made before the man was well out of the room, and embarrassed William and Deborah, who were both present.

William did not like the vulgarity of the fight. He belonged to the new, more precious age, and he instructed Debby to speak of her poor Papa’s ‘accident’ and not of his ‘affray,’ which was the word

she was using.

James thought they were both damned silly, and wondered aloud sometimes what would become of them all when he was in Hell.

"Hades, dear Papa," said Debby mildly on these occasions.

James had not the heart even to swear at her. He kept to his room most of the time, sitting by his fire and thinking.

It was at this period that Septimus had called, and James was most interested in Debby's description. The picture she drew was detailed, and reminded him forcibly of old Will Galantry. He very much wished he had made the effort and seen the youngster. So he was particularly pleased a few days later when he got a letter from Lucius. It was written in a fine hand, which was not at all unsteady, but so small that James, who was affronted by its vigour, had to ask Debby to read it to him.

*My dear Bro. James,* she began.

"He calls you brother, Papa. Is he your brother?"

"That depends," said James. "Read on."

"Very well, dear Papa."

*My dear Bro. James,*

*I felt I should write to thank you for your courtesy to my youngest son, Septimus, who, so he tells me, called upon you the other day and was graciously received by your charming daughter. I hear from him that she is a most elegant young lady and a beauty as well, for the which I congratulate you. My own daughters are excellent women, but even their devoted father could never ascribe them handsome.*

*It is a long time since we met, James. I have been trying to reckon it up, and I make it close on fifty years, which is too long. I daresay we older boys seemed very "antiquated" to you when we came down to our father's funeral. I don't blame you for going off as you did.*

*What happened to that good woman, whose name I forget, who was the "dragon at the gate" in those days? Of course she must be dead by this time. I have never forgotten her. The latter-day servants are not like the old ones, are they?*

*I go out very little now, but sit by my fire and think of the past. My wife died many years ago and my girls are married. One man-servant, nearly as old as I am, looks after me.*

*Putney is a long way from Penton Place, but if you are still striding about—I took it that nothing more than an attack of 'pincher' kept you*

to your room when S. called—I should indeed be very glad to see you. You and I are the last of us.

Will's son, who is another William, is squiring it in the West, and the others went the way of all flesh long ago. At any rate, I hope you will let Septimus wait on you again. He is a good fellow, more like our father than any of us. His verse is thought well of in some quarters. I cannot speak for it myself, not being of a poetical turn of mind. But it seems well enough!

Let me hear of you, James.

Yours very sincerely,

Lucius Galantry.

No. 1, Riverside Way,  
Putney.

When Debby finished reading she held her breath. James was watching the fire.

"So," he said suddenly, "so, my girl."

Debby's heart rose because he did not sound angry; there was no doubt about it. Dear Papa sounded smug. Of course, William had to be shown the letter.

He was some time coming, and Debby waited in agony. Her helplessness was complete; for the young woman of her day and class to take an independent step was to take it off the top of a very narrow pedestal. Debby could see that James was in the process of turning over the responsibilities of his household, of which she was a part, to William, and naturally he had become overwhelmingly important to her.

William was becoming pretty important all round at this time. He was a man of considerable business, not big business, perhaps, in the sense which the term acquired later, but big enough. A great deal bigger than *The Converted World*, at any rate. Already he was developing that unapproachableness which was so noticeable in him afterwards. He was beginning to expect people to be silent when he spoke, and to be impressed when he took an interest in them. He spoke with authority, and he had given up discussing his affairs with James since the old man's principles had begun to look a little over-simple to him. At the moment he was very busy.

Mr. Walter Raven had put him on to a very good thing.



Just lately William had begun to take an interest in Debby. He was bringing his mind to bear upon her, and she found it an alarming experience. Sometimes she caught him looking at her with an expression which made her feel inhuman, as if she were a shop, perhaps, or a house he was thinking of buying and turning into something else. This was a difficult thought for Debby, and not one she would have mentioned to James even had she been able to express it. But it made her feel very apprehensive.

William was always criticising her dresses, urging her to keep her curls in place, and once he bought her a packet of rice powder and told her to dust her face with it. Debby had been scandalized by this, for Miss Malagrowth had made several pronouncements about "unfortunates" who "painted their faces," and she had come to regard the act as something comparable with the tattooing of the word "whore" on a girl's forehead. She indicated this to William, and he told her not to be an almighty fool, and was so savagely contemptuous that poor Debby accepted the tattooing, as it were, and flowered herself gingerly whenever she thought he might be coming.

Debby was present when William read Lucius's letter; she leant over the high back of her father's chair and watched her brother as he sat on the other side of the fireplace, turning the sheets over casually. He folded it up when he had finished and put it back on the mantelpiece. Then he looked at James and smiled ruefully.

James was surprised and a little put out.

"A very cordial letter, don't you think?" he said.

William's smile changed hurriedly.

"Why, yes," he said. "Very nice. The boy wants a publisher for his poems, I suppose."

This was an interpretation which had never occurred to James, but at once it implanted a suspicion in his mind, and as he remembered Lucius more vividly he wondered if there might be something in it. Debby, thinking of Septimus, was not so easily misled.

"Oh, no, dear William," she said. "Oh no. He doesn't want to come again because of that."

William's cold eyes rested on her face enquiringly.

"And why does he, Debby?"

Debby blushed, and did not look up.

"Well?" said William.

Debby laughed with more than coquetry; her little black eyes danced and she looked both naughty and triumphant.

"I think my cousin is interested in—me, dear William," she said.

William looked as if he had been confronted by an unexpected vulgarity.

"I hope you are not getting foolish ideas, living here so much alone, Deborah," he said. "Julia must invite you over to Laurel Lodge more often. I must find you some new friends. By the way, there's a great friend of mine whom I want you to meet. He is a widower and I'd like you to make friends with him. His name is Walter Raven; he's a very wealthy man and very distinguished."

Debby looked panic-stricken. "Oh no," she said. "Please, dear William. Please. I'm such a muff. I'd much rather stay with dear Papa."

James felt her hand clutching his shoulder, and he put his own over it protectingly.

"Of course she would," he said, smiling at William.

William smiled back, and got up.

"Well," he said, "I'm afraid I must go back now. My time is no longer my own. Don't worry about this young kinsman of yours, sir. I'll drop him a line and see him at the office. If he's a reasonable person we must take him up, mustn't we? How will that do?"

Debby's hand trembled, and James hesitated.

He was unnaturally tired in these days and he had no inclination to make any social effort. He felt William was so very capable and could attend to the matter so easily. It was so much simpler to leave everything to William.

"Yes," he said at last. "Yes, if you would. I'll write to Lucius myself I think, though. Don't you?"

William jotted down the address in his notebook.

"Just as you like, of course," he said. "But don't overtire yourself. Putney's an extraordinary place to live, don't you think?"

"Is it?" said James, on the defensive.

William shrugged his shoulders. "It's probably very pretty," he conceded, "and a lot of small property has gone up there in the last few years. I'll see the young man."

When he had gone, Debby threw herself on her knees before her father's chair. She looked alarmingly like Shulie as she peered up at

him.

"What is it, my girl?" said James, who was irritated. "What is it? What's the matter?"

"O Papa," said Debby, as if to the Deity. "O Papa, please, please, don't let my cousin go to see dear William."

"Good God! Why not?"

James was startled. The force of her emotion made him uncomfortable. He felt it was so very overdone and yet he understood it. He, too, was experiencing a strong premonition; he, too, felt that it would be unlucky to let William handle this unexpected overture. Yet his common sense told him not to be silly. In a voice like Dorothy's his common sense pointed out that William's was the only reliable brain the family possessed, while Lucius always had been a self-seeker.

James had listened to Dorothy all his life, and he listened to her now.

"Get up, girl, do," he said to Debby. "Don't be a dunderhead. Why are you getting so fluttered about this silly fellow? He took your fancy, did he?"

Deborah's eyes grew wet, and when she spoke her desperate sincerity gave her words a literalness.

"He did not mind me being a muff, Papa. I think he liked me better for it."

"He sounds an idiot," said James.

"No, Papa. He was not. That's just what he was not. That was why he didn't mind."

To his extreme annoyance, James followed her perfectly. He saw old Will Galantry in his memory's eye. There had been a man who could afford to love a fool.

"I shall write to Lucius myself," he said.

"Oh yes, Papa! Do, Papa! But Papa..."

"What?" James was exasperated. "Speak up and get to your feet, for heaven's sake. What do you imagine you are; a Siddons?"

"No, Papa, but don't let my cousin go to see dear William."

James fidgeted. Any more nonsense of this sort and his heart would begin to hurt him again, he felt certain.

"Enough of this," he said imperiously. "My arrangements have been made. You are hysterical. Be off! Go and walk three times round the garden. (Put on a coat.) And then bring me a glass of

brandy and water. Go along! Go along!"

"Yes, Papa."

Obedience was one of the tricks the Shulie flesh had learned. Debby got up and went towards the door. She was pale, and her little black eyes were tragic.

"I am a fool, Papa," she said, and sounded as if she were pronouncing a doom. "The kind of friends dear William has might be very angry with me for that. My cousin did not mind. But oh, Papa, I'm so afraid he may be very rare."

There was much of Jinny in her reasoning, and James laughed affectionately as he always had at Jinny.

"If there's anything as remarkable as that about him, William will appreciate it," he said. "You are a poor idiot, Deb. God Almighty knows who's going to look after you when I'm gone."

"Dear William will," said Debby, and her voice broke as she ran out of the doorway.

## *Chapter Thirty-one*

Walter Raven sat in the kitchen of his fine house in Westbourne Terrace West, and drank his spirits nervously. He was in the grip of one of his periodical fits of disproportionate terror. Later on, doctors invented reasonable names for this kind of malady, but whatever it is called there was no explaining it away.

It was a fear which had its seat in his belly, and it rose up over him in physical, mental and spiritual nausea. It was not a cold fear, but hot, and it flowed all over him burning and wracking. There was sweat on his forehead and a singing in his ears. Yet inside it all he was quite sane, intelligent, sufficiently informed to know that he had done nothing for which anyone could hang, or even imprison him. He knew, too, that the things he was afraid of were not yet, at any rate, anywhere near reality.

When Walter Raven worried he suffered the agonies of the damned. They showed in his face and dried and shrivelled his body.

His sister was bigger than he was, and in some ways, in spite of her flashing beauty, very much more the man. At the moment she was cooking, working at the table under the shelf where the lamp stood, and the basement window was shuttered so that no inquisitive eye from the street could spy out the lady of the house doing her own work.

After a while she carried the pie she had been making over to the oven, and after it was safely in the dark, glanced at her brother.

"It may never happen, Walter," she said.

He banged his glass down, but he was not drunk yet by any means. The alcohol had scarcely loosened the muscles round his mouth and with him that was always the first sign.

"It must happen sooner or later," he said. "I did not foresee it, but it must have been obvious from the beginning. All these big firms are like that to-day. As soon as they see a small concern succeeding in a branch of their own line, they imitate the product and cut the price until the little people are squeezed out. That's what Croucher Brothers are going to do to Galantry and me in our cardboard mount business, unless we stop them. I can see it coming."

Mildred Raven did not answer immediately, but she put her floury hands on her hips as she turned, and white marks appeared on her dark dress where her apron did not quite cover it.

Her brother began to rave at her. "Oh, for God's sake don't mess yourself up like that!" he burst out with unreasonable fury. "I can't stand sluttishness. You've got flour all over yourself.... It makes me vomit! I vomit, d'you understand?"

Mildred glanced at his hate-filled eyes and shrugged her shoulders. She wiped her hands on a baking cloth and dusted her gown but made no attempt to reproach him. Long ago she had discovered that reproaches took little effect on Walter. Her face was expressionless as she waited for his mood to change.

"I'm nervy!" he said.

She neither agreed nor disagreed, but after a pause enquired casually: "The little factory's doing very well now, though, isn't it?"

"Of course it is," he agreed. "All these new photographers buy their mounts from us, but Croucher Brothers are big cardboard people, and they've started turning out the things now. As it is they are giving slightly better value and as time goes on they'll cut the price right down. We can't compete; you'd never understand."

"I understand perfectly," said Mildred. "What are you going to do?"

Walter drank up the contents of his glass.

"In eighteen months or so, we must either expand and fight them, or get out," he said.

"Well, can you expand?"

"Oh, don't be a hopeless fool." He was querulous again at once. "I haven't any money. You know that. Would you be grovelling about down here in the kitchen with only a couple of charwomen to look after us if I had any real money? Be reasonable!"

The woman eyed him uneasily. "You would take this enormous house," she ventured at last. "All your money seems to go on rent. You will entertain. You will look big."

He raved at her, and when he had relieved his feelings a little he began to explain for the hundredth time.

"I've told you I have to," he insisted. "How do you think I get along at all? How do you think I turn any of these fine ideas of mine into money? How do you think I got William Galantry to come into business with me?"

"Has he got any money?" she said.

"Of course he has. He's made of money. He may not live in a particularly big way—he can afford not to—but he finances a silly religious paper, doesn't he? And he's as full of good works and other expensive nonsense as an egg is full of meat. He's got money."

"I see," she said meekly. "Then why do you have to worry? Can't he put up the money for you to branch out? After all, it's his business as much as yours."

"No doubt he can, and no doubt he will!" Walter was shouting now with no idea of the noise he was making. "He's invested a lot of money already and he won't care to lose it. If he wants to save his own skin he'll have to put up the extra capital, and it'll mean something very considerable. But in that case, where do I come in?"

Mildred Raven saw the situation at last. "Let me see, it's your idea and your invention," she said. "But you couldn't patent it, could you? I remember that. You said it was risky at the time. Walter, why don't you go to him now. Couldn't you make some arrangement with him at once? Now, when everything looks so sound and safe? Suppose you put your cards on the table....

"No!"

"You don't want to, do you? You just don't want to look small."

"Why should I?" he said defensively. "Besides if I did, he wouldn't believe me. He'd think I was trying to twist him. Be intelligent. Haven't we been carefully building up just the opposite impression for years? He's been here, seen the house, seen us live. He doesn't know that you've got a genius for keeping up appearances,"

Mildred was only partially mollified.

"He might not. But Walter, what are you going to do?"

He hesitated. In his own peculiarly feminine way he had been manœuvring her into this position.

"I could tie myself up with him," he said slowly, feeling for each word and keeping his eyes on her. "I could get myself so close to him that he would not be in a position to shelve me. He's very fond of me, you know; he has an enormous admiration for me. He thinks I can make money."

Mildred knew her brother very well, so well that neither his frankness nor his vanity astonished her. Also, she recognized his methods.

"Are you thinking of that sister of his?" she asked abruptly.

"Well, he talks a lot about her, doesn't he?" he said. "I think he has it in mind, don't you?"

"You see more of him than I do." Walter nodded, and continued to watch her carefully.

"I rather think he's thought of it. He's childishly transparent, you know. All these Holy Joe people are."

The woman suddenly became very angry. "I don't think he's at all transparent. I think he's acting. I think he's more clever than you realize. Have you seen this girl?"

Walter ignored her comments which he thought ridiculous; he concentrated on the question.

"No, I haven't met her, but I saw a photograph. She's not nearly as handsome as you are. She's very young and simple-looking. She'd be a lady, of course."

"Meaning I'm not?"

"My good girl, don't be an idiot!" His temper flared up again. "You and I do know each other. We're brother and sister, aren't we? You haven't got to impress me."

"Mother was a lady," said the woman with pathetic vulgarity. "She was a doctor's daughter, wasn't she? Father of course..."

"Our father was a miller's labourer; he couldn't read and he was a drunken brute," said Walter spitefully. "And now for God Almighty's sake, drop it! You're jealous. You were jealous of my first wife, and but for you ..."

"But for me she'd have died before she did," said his sister warningly.

The man got to his feet and went over to put his arm around her. "I know," he said soothingly, "I know, Mil. Sarah was a misery, poor wretched woman. I was a fool to marry her, and you were an angel to put up with her. Now look here, don't be difficult. See how I'm placed. You know I won't do anything silly. But it does look to me as if that might be how things are going. That might be the way out, and I might take it. I thought I'd put it to you so that it did not come as a surprise."

Mildred did not speak immediately. She was thinking she had known something like this must come; she had known Walter would never live without a woman for long. Although Sarah had driven him crazy with her illnesses yet he had liked to have her near him if



it was only to have someone to nag.

"If I can't stand her I shall leave you," she said.

He was so astonished that he betrayed it. "Why, what would you do?"

"I could always go as a cook," she said with as much spitefulness as he had shown. "I'm not so very anxious to appear what I'm not. I loathe this insane pretending. Why can't you live small and safe like a respectable person?"

"Because I'm not that sort of a man," he explained, allowing himself to be side-tracked. "Use you head, Mil, I've got brains. I'm clever."

"You've got ideas," she objected, "not brains. They're not the same things, my boy. How do you know this man, William Galantry, isn't making a fool of you? How do you know he hasn't seen the red light in Croucher Brothers' new move, and isn't trying to work the same safety catch trick on you? He thinks you've got money, doesn't he? His brother is only apprenticed to some paint works or other, isn't he?"

Walter was scandalized. "My good girl, you're being absurd," he said. "You don't understand these people at all. They're not like that."

"You mean they wouldn't do what you'd do?" she enquired viciously.

"I mean they're rather different people," he said stiffly.

"You're idealizing them," she screamed at him. "You're taken in by their voices and their manners and their silly sanctimonious airs."

Walter was pouring himself a drink, and he did not answer for a moment. When Mildred became really abusive it was best to leave her alone. Presently when she had become paler, he began again.

"Galantry told me about that brother," he remarked. "He's the black sheep of the family. When the old father dies they'll pay Master Tom out and ship him abroad, I fancy. You're quite wrong about Galantry; he's a very rich man. Besides, the girl will have money of her own, he told me so."

"How much?" She was contemptuous. "I've got ten pounds a year myself. Mother got me that by selling everything she had just before she died, so you wouldn't collar it."

"I don't know how much money Miss Galantry has," said Walter,

“but somehow I think it will be a little more than ten pounds a year.”

There was a long silence between them while he sat on the table sipping from his little glass.

“You’ll be able to manage her, Mil,” he said at last. “She’s only twenty.”

Mildred remembered her pie. It was not burnt and she took it out carefully.

“I hope sincerely she’s got a fortune,” she observed, as she set the dish on the table.

“There’s a lot of money in the family.”

“You’ll need it. You’ve got the most difficult, finicky ideas.”

“I like things nice.”

“You like things grand, and you like things easy, and if anyone stands up against you, you scream until you get your own way. And if things aren’t just so, you have hysterics.”

“Liking things elegant is a good fault,” he said. “You’ve got it yourself. If ever I went smash, I believe you’d leave me and go to some big house and work like a slave rather than live in ugliness. It’s because we are as we are that this girl is such a good idea. Don’t you see, any sister of Galantry’s must be intelligent, and she’s been to a very good boarding school. She’ll be—well, you know—ultra-refined. Unlike Sarah, she’s healthy and also she’s young and manageable.”

“You sound just as if she were a servant you were thinking of engaging.”

He sprang up. “You say the filthiest things.”

Mildred stepped in front of him. “I’m getting as nervy as you are,” she shouted, her face very close to his own. “This is a mad way to live. We leap from precipice to precipice. You’re a genius I suppose, and because of that you think you can afford it. But it’ll ruin you, and so will those spirits. You drink when you’re worried, and that’s madness. That’s like father!”

He struck her. The movement was involuntary, his hand only flicked her chin but it did touch her, and she began to cry.

He went out at that, slamming the door so violently behind him that all the crocks on the dresser rattled. Mildred wiped her eyes and began to tidy up the kitchen.

“Poor Walter,” she said aloud. And afterwards: “God help her,

whoever she is. I shan't."

## Chapter Thirty-two

One morning late in May James sat in the garden at Farthing Hall. He had a rug round his knees and his ashplant to lean upon as he sat upright in a high elbow chair, his curly white toupé keeping his head from chill.

He was due to die very soon now, he thought. Quite apart from the condition of his heart which, from a purely medical standpoint was likely to give him a sense of great foreboding, he gathered from events that he was nearing the end of his life. His story was rounding off; the threads were tying up. Here he was in a golden spring again with stars in the grass again, and all the mysteries of his childhood explained.

As soon as this final reflection entered his mind, he thought how damned pompous he sounded and what an untrue observation it was. There was much he had never unravelled, and now, as far as he could see, never would. He had no idea what he had been *for*, for one thing, nor if he had accomplished it.

James's life had been concerned with the deeds of men rather than with their thoughts, and therefore he did not quite understand that this was a question which no one could answer for him plainly. He had no illusions about his own ignorance; he knew he was an uninformed old man who had never had the skill or the time to make himself conversant with the accumulated knowledge of his species. Even now it occurred to him that he was not deeply curious as to the purpose of the human race but lately he had felt a desire to know what had been his own individual use, and then really only to see how he had made out. He had half thought of sending for a clergyman to explain it to him briefly, but he feared such a move would alarm Debby, and, too, he was afraid the man might preach at him, and he was too tired for that.

In this attitude he was typical of his class and period. He had lived in a swiftly improvised, materialistic age, and in it he had been a practical modern man with his feet on the earth he liked. He was brother to the ox and kin to the ass, and sometimes it must have seemed to the Eternal Watchers that he wore his tall hat to distinguish himself from them. But he had one saving grace: he

knew for a fact he was not his own god.

He went on thinking on these lines in a speculative fashion for some while. He had plenty of time; all the time there was, anyway, and the sun was warm and pleasant. He thought he could see exactly what he had done with his life, and on the whole he was only partially satisfied with it after all. He had conquered obstacles, and he had been rewarded with William as a protector for his seed. He thought he could say he had been useful to Jinny and useful to William.

Jinny, of course, had done little with her life, but there was great hope in William. All the same, his own had not been a great career, he had not turned out to be the third most important person in the world, nor even important at all. As far as he could see the main lesson he had learned was that it took a tremendous effort to do very little.

None of this was particularly inspiring, and his mind wandered to those more concrete matters in which it was so much more comfortable and experienced.

William had not been over to Penton Place since James had showed him the letter from Lucius, but he had written to tell James that Septimus Galantry had called by invitation at *The Converted World* office, and once there had been politely choked off. Debby had been extraordinarily upset when James gave her William's note; for some time afterwards she had gone about looking positively frightened, and she exasperated James. He could understand a girl being piqued by the loss of a man, or in extreme cases, even heartbroken, but he was damned if he comprehended one being frightened. She was a most unexpected and irritating child. It worried James. Since he had not seen Septimus himself he was bound to take somebody's judgment on him, and it seemed only intelligent to back William's good sense against Deborah's.

By all accounts the youngster had proved a sly, self-seeking fellow, so doubtless William had been very wise to get rid of him.

All the same, James was sorry about it and might have weakened before Debby's entreaties sufficiently to enquire further, had it not been for something else which made the matter distasteful to him.

Lucius had not answered the letter he had taken such pains to write. He realized it had not been a brilliant effort, but it had cost him much labour and in spite of its formality and echo of Mr.

Philby, it had been friendly and inviting. If Lucius had really needed the solace of his own kin, James thought he would have replied. As it was, the incident left an unpleasant taste, and depressed him. As far as he could see he had expended his life in keeping himself an independent gentlemanly Galantry, and now it affronted him to find one of the pure blood trying to curry favour with him who would never have curried favour in his life. It had been a blow struck at the very foundations of his building, and he turned from it wishing that Lucius had either made his gesture as genuine as it had first appeared, or had kept mum altogether.

He put the wretched business out of his head and fell to admiring the garden with its warm walls, its neat grass plot and dancing borders. Here at any rate was simplicity and no shame.

There was a young copper beech which he had planted himself over in the corner. It was growing well, and now its pink buds, gold-tipped, pained him they were so lovely, as they curled upward against the tear-filled blue. James assumed there would be trees in heaven; always provided he was going there, of course. The current theory favouring slightly music-hall adornments for the celestial regions had never appealed to him greatly, but neither had he considered the matter until recently when the subject had appeared more pressing. Now he was bothered if he could make out much about it. Once or twice lately in a shamefaced fashion, he had told Debby to lay aside *The Times Newspaper* and try the Bible on him.

On the whole it had been a disappointment to him; he had found it very remote and foreign, although every now and again Debby's youthful voice had produced a piece of thrilling sophistication from the thin pages. He had made her begin at the beginning, of course, and so far they had only reached the Book of Job. This last had impressed him most. There was one passage about a horse which delighted him, and he had made her read it over and over to him, although he realized his satisfaction from it was not entirely spiritual.

He could remember most of it and he tried it over now with great pleasure:

*"Hast thou given the horse his might?  
Hast thou clothed his neck with the quivering mane?  
The glory of his snorting is terrible.  
He paweth the valley and rejoiceth in his strength;*

*He goeth out to meet the armed men.  
He mocketh at fear and is not dismayed  
Neither turneth he back from the sword.  
The quiver rattleth against him,  
The flashing spear and the javelin.  
He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage;  
Neither believeth he that it is the trumpet.  
As often as the trumpet soundeth he saith 'Aha'!  
And he smelleth the battle afar off  
The thunder of the captains and the shouting."*

James had some ill-considered idea that the whole of the Bible was dictated by the Deity to a clerk or so, and he was comforted by this passage for it occurred to him that the author had not only made horses but had liked them, even for their stupidity, and if horses, then why not James? Particularly, he liked the line about the animal not believing the sound was a trumpet, but mistaking it for another mighty horse, so that he must answer it. Mandrake had cried 'Aha' he remembered.

There was a gate in the wall leading into James's meadow, and through it he could just see a glimpse of poor old Pecker (the same joke as calling one's car 'Knocker') munching at the new grass. Pecker was not much like the charger of the poem, nor had he ever been like Mandrake, about as much, James thought, as himself had been like Edwin Castor, but he was a kind old fellow, and viceless, apart from his failing. James had mentioned him in his will. He had worked it out carefully and reckoned that twenty-five pounds would be sufficient to ensure that he had an undisturbed old age. James had put it all down; the smith was to keep an eye on his teeth, and to rasp down the back grinders when they should grow to interfere with his cropping. Then when he should get too old to keep himself from poverty, he was to be shot and buried under a flower-bed to manure the ground. James did not want his carcass put to any other use. It need not be a *flower* bed, he told William, his executor, but in the garden somewhere where the ground was poor and needed enriching. William had agreed, smiling gently.

The smile had offended James. It was the second time William had offended him lately; the other occasion had been when the young man had found Debby reading the Bible to him, and had said: "That's right," with such a generous and proprietary air that it

almost sounded as if he thought he had something to do with the writing of it. On that occasion James had said to Debby that the fellow imagined "he had God in his pocket." Poor Debby had turned quite white, and said, "Oh! Papa." So he had apologized and told her to be quiet and get *The Times Newspaper*.

It was all very childish, James thought tolerantly; William was a good, clever fellow.

Presently as he sat in the sunshine and smelled the sweet strong air of his home, which felt always as if it were washing and feeding him and striving to make him live, he considered his will again.

He had done his best to make it as sound as old Galantry's had been. Debby had the Smith Estate money, and the rest was divided between the five. Farthing Hall went to William, the house in Town to Debby until she married, when it was to be sold and the profit divided between them all equally.

Had he not been able to trust William, he reflected, there might have been an incentive there for him to get the girl married quickly, but he thought he could trust him. Besides, William had plenty of money. As well as *The Converted World*, which was still doing well, William had a half share in a most valuable photographic mount making business. Yes, William was all right.

But it was a pity he had all girls, save for young Jeffrey. James let his mind wander to Jeffrey; the child was about somewhere, probably down the village with Debby. He was a clever boy but unexpectedly delicate, always home from school recuperating from something.

Well, there it was, the servants had a hundred pounds each and a good character, which was the best he could do for them. He hoped Boxer would stay with Debby; God knew she needed someone to see she dressed herself properly. James grunted. He hoped they would all be all right without him. He did not see what else he could do for them, his part was ending while theirs was but half-way through. It was all a little unsatisfying, he thought, a tale which sounded as if it ought to mean something, and yet apparently did not.

James wondered if he would know more about it when he was dead. He was inclined to doubt this on the whole, and he wondered how much of him would die. His body, what was left of it when he had finished with it, would be translated into grass in some



overgrown churchyard. His soul would live, they said, but gave no definition. James was too tired to attempt to work one out for himself, and the old Will Galantry in him laughed and pointed out that memory died only too obviously, since James's own had been failing for years; and without a body and without a memory James might find himself a dull fellow.

He returned his attention to the flower-beds. They were very neat and pretty and the tulips looked as stiff and clean as Dorothy in her morning prints long ago at Groats. James wondered if he would see Dorothy after he was dead; it seemed a very unlikely idea. He was pleased with the garden, and it occurred to him he made no arrangements to reward the young man who worked in it three days a week. He was reasonably paid, but he was not thanked. It came into James's mind to leave him ten pounds, it would be a large sum to him, the lad might even get married on it. He wished he dared make it a bit more. Finally, he fixed on fifteen and decided he would attend to it while he thought of it. He felt round his chair for the big dinner bell which he always kept by him when he was in the garden.

Boxer came running at its summons, but she was busy and flustered, and she listened to his request with half her mind still on the kitchen stove. He wanted the black leather writing case in which all his papers had been brought from London. He had not been well enough to go down to his desk himself, and had instructed Debby to put all the loose papers into the case without looking at them. He had no doubt that she had done exactly as she had been told.

As soon as the girl returned with the case he unlocked it with the key on his watch-chain and began to turn over the papers inside. Immediately, as if it had been thrust deliberately under his nose, he saw something which startled him. Incredulously he drew it out and sat looking at it. It was his own letter to Lucius, unfranked, and still sealed. As soon as he recovered from his first astonishment he became furious. So this was the explanation of Lucius's silence; the letter had never been sent, and it was James and not his half-brother who had done the mannerless, unforgivable thing and never replied. James was not ordinarily angry. As Boxer came flying at the sound of his violent ringing she thought he looked like a wicked old bull, sitting up in his chair snorting and stamping. His shoulders were hunched, his neck had disappeared, and the veins stood out

down his forehead.

His voice was terrible, she said afterwards. Boxer was frightened of James, and not entirely because she saw that he was going to give himself a seizure. In her alarm she told the absolute truth.

Yes, that was right, she said, she had not posted the letter when James gave it to her because, just before Mr. William left Penton Place after his last visit he told her to look out for it and to keep it back. Mr. William had given her the name and address for which she was to look out, together with a shilling, and had told her that the master was going a little queer in his last illness and might write something to a relative which could make trouble. Mr. William was so clever and so good and religious that Boxer had not hesitated to believe him, and so had done as he asked. She had not known what to do with the letter, and not imagining Mr. Galantry would be down again, she had slipped it into the bureau in his parlour with some other papers for when Mr. William should come again. Miss Deb. must have gathered it up without looking at it. Boxer was sorry if she had done wrong, and could she give Mr. Galantry the shilling?

James, who had been staring at her blankly, shook his head. "Go away," he said, "go away."

Boxer hesitated because, as she told the doctor afterwards, he sounded so "mumbly," but it was clear that he wanted her to go, and so rather than annoy him she went. James watched her disappear into the house; it was a relief to keep his mind on that for a moment, but when she had gone he had to go back and face the information again. He did not doubt her story; he had inspired that sort of fear in that sort of girl before, and he recognized that sort of truth when he heard it.

For a little while he did not know what was the matter with him; his anger had evaporated as he had listened to the girl and a new emotion had taken its place. As it grew upon him, chilling him, he knew it suddenly. He was afraid.

William was his prop, his centre, the mainstay of his tent. If William had done this, what else had he done? If William would do this, what else would he do? The inference was clear. William was arranging to have a perfectly free hand without any intelligent interference. His was the only brain in the entire family, and he preferred it to remain so. Why?

James, who like the war horse had mocked at fear, was frightened now. A dozen considerations struggled into his mind, and the greatest of them stood out before the others.

William did not love Debby or the rest; William did not love anybody. James had often noticed this about him with interest, and had thought little of it. It had never occurred to him that it might matter, but in view of this discovery he saw its purpose. If William was a traitor, if William was not good, if he was not honourable, was not just, was not even honest, then the fact was of terrifying account. In James's desperation, and it had become desperation now for his heart was popping dangerously and the garden was swimming into a rainbow, he strove to comprehend William and to find reassurance. He was hopelessly confused. William and Edwin Castor became one in his mind. He could see the face quite distinctly; it was cold, noble, golden-haired and alien. As he stared at it the truth was forced upon him with the brutality of revelation, and he saw that he himself had never known or loved William.

He had admired him, and had been ridiculously proud to possess him. He had exalted William and had put his trust in him. Because William had possessed attributes which James himself could not achieve, he had endowed him also with all his own virtues, but he had never loved him because he was not lovable.

Now James had come the other way to knowledge, and had discovered the truth about William by trial and error, and it had taken too much time. Now James was helpless. He was afraid for the part of himself he was leaving behind; he was afraid for Debby and for Tom and the boys at school, and even for old Pecker in the field; all left in the hands of the alien.

James's heart was hurting him, his eyes were clouding, and the world was slipping away.

"If only I could have got even with him," he said aloud, and to his surprise an old country voice, Larch's or Jed's, answered him out of the darkness of his under-mind.

"You've made a god on him, ain't you, boy?" it said. "Put your faith in him, ain't you? Reckon you'll *hev* to, you know. Yes. Yes."

## Chapter Thirty-three

*James began to dream.*

They say some men when dying glimpse at heaven, but James was such a primitive, so much a part of the black earth and the green, that he took his glance at the earth.

His dream began in a formalised, diagrammatic fashion. He thought he left his chair and walked across the grass plot to meet Edwin Castor, who was advancing towards him hand outstretched. Castor had another man with him, who was a stranger to James, and of whom he did not much like the look. This man was small and flashy, and as he came up he said in the obliging, unlikely way of dreams:

“I’m Walter Raven, you know.”

James was repelled by him, but he had no time to consider this, for at that moment he saw Jinny there beside them, and the first thing he noticed about her was that she was far smaller than she had been in life. The vision had all the dream’s absurdity, and James was not astonished by anything that happened, only worried.

The four of them took hands and stood in a circle, and it was only then that James realized that they were in the midst of a crowd. He caught sight of many faces he knew in the company, although many were strangers. He saw Old Will Galantry there, and Frank Castor, and Alfred Timson and his wife, and Debby and Shulie. Far away, on the extreme edge, he saw a gaunt shadow which might have been Dorothy, but there was no sign of Phoebe, although he looked for her. He was only aware of a need of her, a sense of her absence.

Soon they all began to move. It happened very quickly and smoothly, and with an irrevocableness which convinced James that he was observing something that had happened before, rather than a present reality. He also received the impression that the same thing was happening, and had happened to him elsewhere, but with slightly different partners, and this idea did not astonish him either.

It was very sunny and ordinary in the garden, and the four of them who stood still in the centre were very close together now. Nearer and nearer they came until they began to touch. Jinny and

Raven were very small by this time, but Castor was of normal size, while James was largest of all.

They moved closer and closer, pressed on by the crowd behind them until, in the same slow but by this time agonizing way, they began to merge. The pain in James's chest was more terrible than he had ever felt pain before; it tore and suffocated him.

On and on the steady movement continued, the crowd ever pressing inward, until presently—there was only one man there.

In his dream James became aware of someone new taking over the responsibility. It was the responsibility not only of that mass of impulses, powers and weaknesses which was all there was left of James himself to continue on the earth, but also of all those other impulses and powers which constituted much of the surviving portion of Castor, Jinny and Walter Raven, not to mention any amount of other people.

James was far too occupied with essential things just then to take much account of a phoney, quick-silver business like time.

It would seem that the only really obvious thing about time is that every living thing has its own time, its own measure between conception and maturity, maturity and decay, so that it must be only for the convenience of the whole that the matter has become a fixed affair at all.

James, then, since he was only an individual, had his own time, and the fact that his dream took him about as far forward in calendar time as his memory of, say, Mandrake took him back, was of no consequence whatever to him. Each picture could lie next to the other in his mind.

James caught his glimpse of the survival, not of his soul, not of the minute part of him which was the responsibility, his bit of God; that went into the Great Pocket to be looked at and considered. James took his peep at the larger, imperfect part of him which continued on the earth. In his dream he saw this part of himself very clearly, and at a most significant moment in its history. James dreamed of himself at the instant when the man who housed him along with so many others, and whose responsibility he had become, was split and torn; at a moment when every single, separate part of the fellow was fighting passionately for life.

In his dream James saw himself when he was the greater part of a man called James Edwin Galantry, one morning in May in the

year nineteen hundred and forty-one.

At that time the said James Edwin Galantry was facing not so much an overwhelming urge to take his life as a desperate desire not to—somehow.

James saw with James Edwin's eyes, as he walked up and down the lawn at Farthing Hall three-quarters of a century later, and saw for the first time in either of their lives the bright clear light of the country of despair.

It took James some little while to make out who exactly James Edwin was. When the information did come to him it came in flashes, as if he were remembering it rather than having it told to him. There was little strange in this, since at the time he actually was a part of James Edwin, but at first it seemed queer to James, for it came patchily as memories do.

James 'remembered' therefore on that morning in nineteen forty-one that James Edwin was the son of Jeffrey, who had been the only son of William, and that Jeffrey's wife, the mother of James Edwin, was no less a person than Belle Raven, the Edwardian variety star, daughter of Debby and poor Walter Raven, whom nobody mentioned after his death because he had killed himself when he could delude no one any longer that he was more grand than other men.

James 'remembered' that there had been an almighty row in the family when Jeffrey married Belle, for after suddenly throwing up his preparations for the Church and taking to painting saleable, if uninspired, illustrations to children's religious books, he had avowed himself as Socialist (a highly unfashionable faith at the time), and then, still abruptly and unexpectedly, had married his music-hall cousin, who until her success had been one of his poorest and most despised relations.

This revelation was all very swift and startling to James, but it gave him a very vivid picture of Jeffrey as he had been when grown, and also it explained the first part of his dream and showed him how it was that he came to be in such unexpected company. Best of all, it explained what the old country voice within him had meant when it said that somehow or other he must get even with Edwin Castor.

Now here he was in the same body with him, and must at last become one with him. Together they needs must absorb and digest

and help and conquer each other. There was no possible escape for either of them. It frightened the dreaming James when he understood that, and saw the unrelenting truth that a man gravitates towards the thing he worships.

When he had recovered a little he went on with his exploratory 'remembering,' trying to find out what had happened to James Edwin to bring him thus to the final edge of his resource. The fellow had had a strange team to drive; James and Castor, Jinny and the little dark defeatist, who yet had such a strong measure of the power to create.

James began to 'remember' all sorts of things. He began to see something of the dusty harvest of imitation aristocracy which the great middle classes had so triumphantly brought home, only to find it mouldy in store and so exorbitant in cost of production that when they had raised their heads from it to look about, they had shuddered away from their own handiwork. That story had been as though the topmost branches of a thrusting tree had suddenly shied away from the sun to which they had been growing, James thought in his dream.

James Edwin had been born after that harvest. The man James supposed was actually a great grandson, but to him he was more, much more than a son. In his dream James realized that he loved James Edwin as himself; he had to. The man was himself, at least in major part.

James 'remembered' Jeffrey as James Edwin had known him, which is to say, as a father. He had been a man in an inescapable muddle; a man thrust on by every impulse towards a goal which with his living eyes he saw was a dead end. Jeffrey had been a man who sent his sons to exclusive schools and then raved at them for believing the social teachings they learned there. He had been a man who was for ever trying to make friends with working folk, only to have them touch their hats to him and turn away uncomfortably; a man who married a woman because she was gloriously vulgar and alive, only to have her leave him for men who were more vulgar and lively than himself.

He had been a man who had seen his eldest son, the clever one who had looked like old Will Galantry and had written so very much better verse, sent out to die in France within a day or so of his leaving school. He had been a man who, having been brought up to believe in a gentlemanly business genius of a God who had

been happy to possess Jeffrey's own father William as a sort of spiritual office boy, came slowly to realize that there was something very wrong with this picture. Jeffrey had come to realize that his wife, Belle Raven, told no more than the truth when she said his father William had gone into business with the brilliant and apparently wealthy Walter Raven, had married Debby to him to consolidate the position, and immediately afterwards, on discovering that a smash was imminent, had left her to her fate. He had got out himself by selling his share in the concern to yet another sanctimonious old hypocrite called Great piece, who had dealt with the situation in a manner which had expedited Raven's suicide.

Jeffrey himself had seen William's charity to Debby afterwards, and it had been the kind which gave charity its false name.

In his dream James saw Jeffrey as a man whose idols had crashed round him all the time, a man who had been bred and trained to be a gentleman, and who had come to believe gentlemen were ungentle; a man who had been taught to believe in God, and who had come to believe God was hypocritical. James found he could be very sorry for Jeffrey.

However, the story which James was 'remembering' so fast was not all dark. James saw Debby as James Edwin had known her, as an old woman. He saw her as a funny old Debby, exasperating and absurd as ever, but incorruptible and therefore unscathed. Through James Edwin's eyes James saw a Debby, who had borne and tended children, who had starved for them and worked for them, and kept heart by taking no thought for the morrow, and who, after Belle left Jeffrey, had come to Farthing Hall to take care of their sons.

James saw a Debby who had brought up this second generation in the same way that she herself had been brought up, and he saw her after they were grown trotting over to William's great house to nurse first Julia, and then the old man himself, with a devotion their daughters could not imitate. He saw her later still after their deaths, retiring to a cottage to live as Dorothy had lived; and he saw her in a flash as she was now, untidy as ever, happy as ever, sitting darning in the sun, a ragged Bible at her side, a romantic novelette tucked into her chair, and the lively hopefulness of eternal youth in her little black eyes.

In his dream, James saw a Debby who by some magic he did not understand, by some formula handed on by her mother, some



rigmarole about hoping and enduring, had yet for all her thundering stupidity, for all her handicaps, for all the mindful cruelty of men miraculously conquered life.

The sense of urgency in the dream was tremendous, and James left Debby and went on with his enquiries into James Edwin, whose fate was his own fate, whose chance was his own chance, and whose potential failure was his also. James Edwin was not a young man; he was in the late thirties; he was not a fool, Castor was seeing to that. He was not a coward, either, that was James's province and he was doing his best. Yet the man was at the end of his resources and James, with his earthly mind (for he was not dead yet, but dreaming), was striving to comprehend.

James began to 'remember' James Edwin's history, and it took him into the false peace period between the two wars; the breathing space while another world generation was growing up to finish a fight which had been too bitter for the blood of one to sweeten it. Much of this world was incomprehensible to James, and since a man does not see what he does not comprehend, James followed James Edwin from the emotional angle which alone never changes.

James 'remembered' James Edwin's reactions when Jeffrey convinced of folly by the horrors of two years of the first World War, had decided to break free from his hampering traditions and to back his own belief. As a first step, he had taken James Edwin from a Public School just before his School Certificate Examination, and had told him, somewhat theatrically, to work with his hands. James Edwin had not resented the move greatly and in after life he had come to think of it as a very good thing, but it had had a tremendous effect upon him at the time. For one thing it had changed most of his friends and that had touched him nearly, for with Jinny in him James Edwin had been a man who loved his friends. The James in James Edwin had been stimulated by the change, and now in his dream James 'remembered' James Edwin's grim satisfaction when, after a campaign of wire-pulling and waiting, he had at last got himself taken on as an apprentice at the great Parkinson Motor Works. In the evenings he had attended a night school and had matriculated.

The first year had been the worst, James 'remembered,' for he had lived on the eighteen shillings a week Parkinson had paid him; the Castor in him had been a great help to him at this time, James noted, but then so had the James. Where would he have been

without James's physique? James's pride which was Dorothy's pride in the elements of civilization or James's own great bull-headed courage to combat the combined effects of semi-starvation and the new and hostile people?

James's weaknesses had been there too though, James noticed with regret; James's naïvety, James's secret sense of importance, James's passionateness.

All the same, he had got by, and in the end had been supremely happy. The early pre-war years had been hard but pleasant going. At the end of his apprenticeship James Edwin had entered the drawing office at Parkinson's, but he had not languished there; expansion in the trade had given him his chance and he had got on. In ten years he had become the bright boy assistant to Parkinson's chief engineer. He had shown more than a gift for the work and gradually the inventive Raven in him had begun to adapt itself to the new requirements.

James 'remembered' several triumphs of James Edwin's at this period, and he saw again the freedom which the young man had discovered in the new expression of himself in steel. James could comprehend the satisfaction in it, he could understand what it was that James Edwin had found so inspiring in his machine, for the delight which James had taken in Mandrake lay in his strength and symmetry, and these were here translated into a later form.

In his dream James 'remembered' that he had shared greatly in James Edwin's triumph when old man McBride had picked him out and taken him off to join his unusual outfit in South London. McBride, James 'remembered,' was a tolerated eccentric in the motor world, his small firm was distinguished, and men who found they could not buy him were sufficiently impressed by his genius to buy from him and let him live. McBride was his own chief designing engineer and he collected James Edwin, so somebody said, in case he died in the middle of a job. With McBride, James Edwin had begun to reveal the powers that were in him and during his first two years with the old man, he produced the celebrated "Mole" haul with the first four-wheel drive, which could drag a lifeboat over a beach with a surface like a quarry.

These had been great days for James Edwin, and in his dream James was warmed by the memory of them. These had been like his own horse days, packed with excitement and rivalry and triumph.

As James went on dreaming he began to see the people who had dominated James Edwin's life. With these he was more at home; these his own nineteenth-century mind could understand, and it was evident to him that he must understand somehow if he was to do the best for this future part of himself now at the moment of trial.

The figure whom James 'remembered' most vividly in James Edwin's life was Phœbe. James Edwin called her by some other name, but James 'remembered' that he had known from the beginning that it was she. It had been Phœbe slightly different, perhaps, but still so very much herself. Phœbe composed of her own ingredients, Phœbe with black hair, but still Phœbe. In his dream, James 'remembered' how he, the James part of James Edwin, had leapt up to welcome her with hungry thankfulness, and how the Castor in James Edwin had been terrified by James's certainty and recognition. It had been a difficult passage for James Edwin grappling with the two of them.

James 'remembered' that there had been many outside influences which had combined against James Edwin's marriage to Phœbe; some of them had been economic considerations, but there were others more difficult for James to understand. There had been urgent advice of older people who still had the disasters of many war marriages fresh in their minds. They had warned against marriage, and the James in James Edwin had been bewildered. For a time it had appeared as if marriage itself had gone out of fashion, a situation which had struck him as unnatural whatever the condition mankind had made for itself, as ridiculous as if a world of half-made pairs of scissors had decided assembly was uneconomic. The James in James Edwin had put his foot down, James 'remembered,' and had bullied the Castor part of him into a daring frame of mind by no means natural to it, and James had won.

It had been about this time, James 'remembered,' that he had begun to get the upper hand of the Castor in James Edwin and to educate him, modify him. In his sleep James grunted with pleasure.

It was still warm and sunny in the nineteenth century day and the old man breathed deeply in it, his eyes tightly closed and his hands twitching in his lap.

In his dream James 'remembered' the early years of James Edwin's marriage to Phœbe, particularly he 'remembered' the restoring and familiar feel of her as she slid into his heart and into

his arms in bed. James Edwin, who had none of old Will Galantry's verve in him, had told her that she felt like an old coat he was putting on; Phœbe had understood him perfectly, and James had been absolutely certain of her and had known that with her he was completed once again.

Their early life together had been very familiar to the James in James Edwin, almost too familiar. They made all the same old mistakes, and the James in James Edwin had been exasperated by this, but had still belonged too closely to his own modern world to do much about it. It had been so very much the same as long before when James himself had had the responsibility for living; now as then, there was something vaguely meaningless in the happiness of his association with her, something without content in its very completeness and comfort. It had been a sensation of ending when there was no end. James Edwin and Phœbe complemented each other and made one living thing, and so what? What was the purpose of that living thing? Where did they go from there? Both Phœbe and James Edwin had a pretty shrewd idea of the answer, but for various reasons connected with the civilization in which they lived, they did not go into the matter.

There had been plenty to occupy them; Phœbe had still had her stage career to absorb her, while James Edwin had made great advances in his own work.

At McBride's he had been doing very interesting things in these years, secret things, rather terrible some of them, to meet War Office requirements.

In his dream James 'remembered' that the part of himself which was still alive on earth had been thrilled and exalted by the idea of the tank, for he had felt that here was a war-horse which need never be afraid. The rest of James Edwin had been fascinated too; the Raven in him had been stimulated and made inventive, the Castor had seen how it could be done, and only the little Jinny in him was revolted and afraid.

As well as the pleasure of his work, James Edwin had had other preoccupations. This had been the period of the great friends. In his dream James paused in his recollecting, as the first chill of the approaching winter crept up to meet him.

He saw James Edwin for what he had become, a man who put his faith in People. James himself had put his faith in princes and

they had betrayed him. James Edwin who was, after all, mainly only James himself modified by those princes, had gone one step forward in the same direction. James Edwin had put his faith in Friends. In the beginning it had been all right; there had been great days at McBride's.

'Tieff had been there. James Edwin had known 'Tieff since his school days, and their careers had run side by side. He was British born of Russian parents, brilliant, interested only in machinery, and capable of extremes of gaiety and depression. As James saw him now in this annihilating vision, he saw there was much of Samuel in his sophistication, of Edwin Castor in his sharp mind, and a little, too, of Jed of all people in a vein of simple reasonableness underlying the rest. Yet, of course, he was no kin to any of these, which appeared strange to James, who even then would not face one of the simplest and most terrible of the facts governing mankind.

Micky had been the second of James Edwin's friends, and the third of a brilliant company. James Edwin had been drawn to him the moment old man McBride had brought him along. He had been so frivolous, so extraordinarily light-hearted and amusing, his gaiety had appealed irresistably to the James in James Edwin while the inconsequence of his chatter had made even the Castor in him laugh.

In his dream James was reminded most forcibly of Toole when he thought of Micky, but there was something different in him, something which he had not met anywhere before.

Together the three young men had worked under old McBride, had fostered great hopes, and had been rewarded. It had been a most glorious experience. As James saw it, that year had been for James Edwin a taste not so much of Heaven as of the earth; earth made right. The three had created together and their creations had succeeded. As a team they had appeared invincible; conditions conspired to help them and their precious machine grew naturally. Snags were overcome, early trials were promising. Triumph had not even been spoiled by ease, and the pain of creation had been sharp and fruition all the sweeter.

James Edwin had exerted himself to his fullest extent. He had grown in power, and he had been so happy that people catching sight of him suddenly had been inclined to laugh. That had been the High Summer of life and it had lasted only a little while.

In his dream James 'remembered' that James Edwin's winter had begun when Phoebe went away. Her chance had come and it had seemed wrong not to snatch at it. The new world had offered her such promise, the Hollywood offer had been so good and character actresses had been stars before. James Edwin had put forward no objection, although the James in him had been secretly outraged; the Castor in James Edwin had remonstrated with the rebellious James and had cited the fashion of the day, and pointed out to James that he had no right to keep an equal unfulfilled. The Castor in James Edwin had asked the James in him who the hell he thought he was. So Phoebe had gone, and after a while her letters had betrayed a brittle quality which had made James Edwin, who was tied to his machines, wonder unhappily what they were doing to her, and how much she had changed. He knew that she was missing him just as he missed her, and had realized that this missing was by no means purely sentimental, but a thing far more fundamental. All the same, he had been a man of his time, so there had been nothing he could have done about it.

After Phoebe's departure, the cold had set in, and there had come the beginning of the trouble over the machine. James saw in his dream that there had been hurry and delay at the same time; there had been changes in the specification, improvisations and arguments, as extraordinary information had come creeping through concerning enemy development. Then there had been more hurry, more delay, more changes. And all the time a curious dilatory attitude in the nation, and reflected in its rulers. McBride had grown an old man in six months. James Edwin had been taxed to the utmost, 'Tieff had become sulky and morose, and there had been a subtle change in Micky.

In James's dream the period appeared in patchy retrospect, emotionally vivid, factually incomplete. As James saw it this had been a time of endless and contradictory conferences with worried authorities incapable of understanding matters, which to experts were elementary. Gradually James Edwin's baby (McBride had christened it 'The Bride' and saw nothing incongruous in that) had been altered and weakened, plastered with excrescences, and patched and deformed so that a new atmosphere altogether had come into the workshop. The strain had been continuous; more hurry, more delay, more bombshells from the authorities, more and more mucking about.

In his dream James saw the Munich Crisis, but he saw it purely emotionally as it had affected James Edwin. He 'remembered' James Edwin's panic, born of the knowledge of complete unreadiness, and followed by sudden revulsion from the very purpose of the thing he had made.

That nightmare had passed. James saw it go as he dreamed in his chair in the garden. James Edwin had got down to work again.

In his dream James saw him during the following year; he saw how the muddle in the workshop had grown, how the hurry had been stepped up to panic speed, and how the delays had appeared monstrous obstacles in the path. *The Bride Light Infantry Tank*, still in an experimental stage when it should have been in full production ceased to grow naturally, and became a hybrid affair. All the pleasure went out of the work. Tieff had writhed under the constant pinpricks and had nagged James Edwin, who had put his head down and had worked on with the patience of desperation.

Micky had been his saviour at that time. Of them all he alone had seemed little affected; James Edwin had leaned on him and confided in him and his affection for him had grown.

When the crash had come in the September, the Bride had been nowhere near ready for her groom of fire. James 'remembered' James Edwin fighting against the premonition of failure. James 'remembered' James Edwin struggling and putting his faith firmly in individual man; man's sense, man's decency, man's strength and the might of his machines.

The first blow under the heart had come suddenly, and it was the first real thrust at the vitals of James Edwin's structure.

As the first shock of comprehension that the Sword of Damocles had fallen at last and that war was inevitable had come to him, in that moment, Micky had disappeared. He went like a shadow, like a bright day when night falls. There was nothing of him left but regret; one morning he was there as usual, gay as usual, inspiring, comforting, full of plans and interest, and the next he was gone, his flat empty, all his papers burned.

Dreaming in the sunlight of a quieter day, James 'remembered' James Edwin's reactions to the official enquiry which had slowly forced the truth upon him. In the end the facts had convinced him, but he had accepted them with the reluctance with which an iron bar bends slowly back beneath an overwhelming weight. He had

leaned away from the truth, but it had sought him out and made him recognize it. There was no doubt about it: Micky, his mission over, had gone back to the enemy government by which he had been employed. James saw no details, only James Edwin's pain. He saw his dying hope, his shame, his anger, and above and around them all, his helpless sense of loss.

At that time 'Tieff had been very good to him. He was a man of lesser passions and his blessed sensibleness had comforted the Castor in James; for the James in James Edwin there had been no comfort at all until Phoebe came back.

In the meantime, *The Bride* had gone into production just as she was, improperly tested, part finished and all her secrets known to the enemy. In those unbreaking days old man McBride had collected 'Tieff and James Edward and together they had begun again.

Propped up in the bright morning air on the lawn of the nineteenth-century Farthing Hall, James stirred slightly, and Boxer, who had been watching him apprehensively from an upstairs window, decided with relief that he was still asleep and dreaming. Far off in that other present, James was still pursuing that part of himself which must go on living and finding out and mixing and digesting and getting sound or going down.

In his dream it was a few minutes before noon, which he had come to consider a vital hour. He was beginning to follow with his living mind why James Edwin was so near the end of his resistance. The events, or rather the emotional reactions to the events, rushed through his mind like blending colours on a screen.

The second of the McBride tanks, which was called the *Cross Eight*, had been conceived in chaos, and had grown with maddening slowness. From the beginning it had been designed for France, and from the beginning it had been predestined to be used in North Africa. The requirements changed every two days. By the time it had been needed in thousands, when the enemy had turned the Maginot, its engine was at any rate designed.

At least twenty-five of the *Bride* had been shipped with other now more famous British tanks to France, and 'Tieff had gone out with them to see where their worst faults lay in action. Old McBride had refused to part with James Edwin, so 'Tieff had gone alone, and his friend had stayed behind, and sweated on the fifty-seventh



alteration in the requirements of the *Cross Eight*. This had been in April, and James in his dream 'remembered' James Edwin's state of mind during the next six weeks as the news of the retreat came through, and he realized with so many more of his countrymen that the France they believed in had died of wounds long ago.

That, as James 'remembered' it, had been the period of James Edwin's first despair; that had been the first time when he had been aware of a fundamental weakness in himself and his beliefs, but the James in James Edwin had got him by again, and had played its reserve card and had developed cussedness.

Suddenly it had come again, a second blow under the heart.

'Tieff had been brought back from Dunkirk with the rest of them, but they had not let James Edwin see him for a long time, and when at last he did get permission to visit him, the nurse did her best to warn him.

In his dream James saw that James Edwin had come out from that interview with his friend in a new state altogether. He had been still himself, still obstinately determined to get by somehow, but beneath that there had been born an apathy, as if the personal and private part of himself had fainted if it was not dead. 'Tieff had looked all right when James Edwin saw him; physically, they said, he was better than he had been for years, and he could talk. But the words had not been his words.

'Tieff had not known James Edwin as he stood at the bedside, and had been afraid of him. The nurse told James Edwin that after the dive-bombing 'Tieff had been afraid of almost anything. James Edwin who knew 'Tieff, and loved him and leaned upon him, and who felt that without him he was alone, had done a little more than his best. His greatest quality, which was patience, an adult variation of James's own determination, had been asserted to its utmost. He had sought painfully for any sign of the man he loved within the febrile chatter, and he had continued his search every day until they took pity on him and explained.

The discovery which James Edwin had made very slowly during those long, sultry days was that the personality and not only the brain was mortal, and must die for a while. That discovery shook his faith in the individual and left him without belief.

In his dream, James looked for escape. He saw no point in going on, and he 'remembered' James Edwin had felt the same. There had

been no sense in being alive. In his dream James saw with interest that it had been the Jinny in him who had hoped when there was no hope, and had endured when endurance had come to an end.

James Edwin had had his relief. The miracle which comes to those who wait had come to him, and Phœbe, moved by something neither he nor she had known to lie beneath her gaiety, had thrown up everything and braved the seas, and come home without his asking her.

With Phœbe, James Edwin's comfort and completeness had returned in greater part. All the while his work had gone on. The delays were less frequent, but the margin of time was even shorter, and the requirements changed again as the Desert became the chief battlefield. Old McBride had wept when the *Cross Eight* went into full production without sufficient trials.

At this time James Edwin had lived his life in Phœbe, and the James in him had been suddenly comforted and given new life, new promise altogether, when she grew slowly heavy with his child. Then the raids had begun, and she had been brave and he had been a coward on her account. As James saw it in his dream this period had proved the most terrible of all for James Edwin. A presentiment of disaster had dogged him sleeping and waking. It had clouded his mind and dried up his body; it had made him impossible to live with: it had destroyed even his apathy; and at last from that padded cell he had stepped out beyond into the fearful country of the vivid light.

James saw this region for the first time as still 'remembering' he followed the history of James Edwin's emotional life. He 'remembered' the sense of being apart from one's fellows, the appalling clarity of every incident, the obviousness of every motive, the horrifying responsibility of being alive. He 'remembered' James Edwin's conviction that Phœbe and the child were his only link with normal living. James Edwin had harried Phœbe; he moved her from Farthing Hall to Wales; from Wales to Suffolk; from Suffolk to The Lakes; and always, every moment of the day and of the noisy, relentless night, he was afraid. It had gone on so long, there had been weeks and months of it, each moment memorable, so that years of consciousness had seemed packed within the time.

Finally, when the birth of the child had come near, he had been able to bear the anxiety no longer, and had over-ridden all Phœbe's passionate objections. It had not been easy to arrange her passage

to the U.S.A., but James Edwin, hag-ridden by his premonitions, had achieved it and had taken her in his arms and said good-bye to the two of them.

James ‘remembered’ James Edwin’s state of mind perfectly. For the first time then he had known what people meant when they said they had no choice. For the first time James Edwin had been aware of the giddy Dance of the Years, swinging himself and all the rest of mankind into a whirling circle of intricate figures. The sober Castor had revolted from this imagery, but all the time since it was an honest intelligence, it could not hide its eyes and the picture had crept into James Edwin’s reasonable mind again and again.

James saw the story racing on to that point in Time which, whatever else it was, was now. He ‘remembered’ James Edwin hearing first the rumour, and then the official announcement:

*American Passenger Vessel... Some Survivors.*

James saw McBride as he came to realize very slowly that James Edwin was not himself any longer, and that the reports on the *Cross Eight’s* production figures were not sinking in to him. James saw the old man turn from his own machine to that other not of his making, which had broken down.

Still in his dream, James saw McBride send James Edwin home to the deserted Farthing Hall, and heard him tell him carefully what to do.

“Wait there,” he had said. “You’re no good to me here. Wait there. When good news comes, I’ll wire you.”

James saw that James Edwin had waited six days, and that this was the morning of the seventh day and that it was three minutes to noon.

When James Edwin walked down the garden at Farthing Hall he was not thinking of Death so much as of finish; the end, not so much of his physical life, as of his general make-up of every part of him. He did not want to survive.

James thought he walked beside James Edwin, that Castor walked on the other side, and that around them were all the others—a legion of them.

James Edwin lay down in the rough grass where old Pecker had once cropped, and because the gun in his pocket hurt him with its bulk, he took it out and laid it within arm’s reach.

In James’s dream the scene was very vivid. He saw the bright,

sunlit day, the waving grasses, and the young man who was so like himself but for the Castor colouring lying among them.

James saw things that were strange to him. There was a pylon in the next field, and high above him in the blue, two little planes like silver fish slipping unobtrusively by, but he did not remark these especially. It was the new path which caught his eyes as it wandered along at the edge of the meadow. In his own day people were always trespassing along there, and now it seemed that they had got their way, for there was a defined track with gravel on it.

As James was looking at the path he saw a woman with a little girl of four or so coming purposefully down it. As he watched, they stepped off the path and advanced towards James Edwin through the grass.

The woman was tall, and she reminded James of Dorothy at first, but as she came nearer he saw she was somebody new. She had red hair and big bones in her face, and was of a type entirely foreign to him.

As she approached, James Edwin reached out for the gun and hid it in his pocket before he rose. He was not attempting to pretend that he was pleased by the intrusion and James saw for the first time that he made a slightly alarming picture, his skin drawn tightly over his bones, and his hooded eyes, which were the Castor blue, darkened with pain.

The stranger came on resolutely, however, and smiled in a frank fashion which stretched her wide mouth and lit up her eyes.

"I'm afraid you'll feel this is an unpardonable thing of me to do, Mr. Galantry," she said nervously, "but I caught sight of you and I felt I just had to come up and speak. I've been staying over at the Wendon's with my little girl, and I heard you were down here on a visit. You see, my name is Galantry too."

James Edwin was not helping her, and she hurried on, blushing.

"My husband and I came over at the beginning of the War, and he joined up with the R.A.F. We're South Africans, you know. His name is John Galantry and his father was Rex Galantry?"

Her voice rose in a question and she paused. James Edwin looked at her blankly. He was praying only that she would go quickly.

"I see you don't know those names?" she said wistfully.

"No. No, I don't," said James Edwin, struggling to keep his tone at least polite. "There's only me left of our lot," he said awkwardly.

"I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry too," she said, and hesitated before turning away.

James Edwin did not stop her and she would have gone, but after a few steps she looked back.

"My husband's grandfather's name was Tom," she said. "He came from London, I believe. There was a quarrel....?"

James Edwin shook his head, but the dreaming James was suddenly excited. He looked at the child, and that part of him which was in James Edwin looked also. She was a round, dark little thing, with hoods to her bright black eyes, and as they looked at her she ran off into the grass and held her arms out to the wind. She stood there for a moment letting it caress her, and her snaky black hair blew out behind. Her mother called her sharply, and she came back at once and looked up at James Edwin with dawning interest.

"Who are you?" she demanded. And then with passionate curiosity and sympathy for his wretchedness, which was apparent to her if not to her mother: "Oh, who are you?"

In his dream James recognized Jinny's voice and Jinny's power of identifying herself with the next man. He struggled within James Edwin, urging him to see her and know her who she was. But the man's preoccupations held him, and he did not want to understand, James felt himself becoming frantic in his dumbness, and he fought with the rest of them who were in the later man. In the end he was successful.

Presently James Edwin looked at the child, and spoke on impulse.

"You should go and see Debby," he said. "I'll give you her address if you like. She's my grandmother, she may have known Tom."

The woman thanked him. She was too overcome by her own embarrassment to notice the unnatural condition of the man, but the child saw it and her sympathy forced itself upon James Edwin. He stood looking after her when she went, and noticed her small, fat arms held out to the breeze as she ran.

When he lay down in the grass again the James within him and the James who was dreaming combined to comfort him.

"There is no dying," said James to James Edwin. "There is no escaping. *Somebody is doing all this. Somebody is stirring the bowl.*"

James Edwin lay in the grass until it was three o'clock, and by

that time his gun looked not only cheap and ridiculous but also useless. The heaviness of his sorrows was still with him, but he had had a great experience.

In his weariness he buried his head in the warm grass as James had done long ago in the field behind Jason's house, and after a long time he slept. It was dusk when he came down out of the garden; he had very little idea what had happened to him but he felt light-hearted and free because of a presentiment he had had that the miracle had occurred, and that Phoebe somehow or other was all right.

These premonitions had worried him all his life. After a long experience of them he had come to believe they were the outcome of simple telepathy between himself and persons near to him in distance rather than love. In his dream James saw him hurrying down the narrow path between the pear trees, his step lighter than it had been for weeks, and his eyes obstinately hopeful. James had had the premonition also, and he was overjoyed but not surprised when he saw old Miss Wilsmore, the post-mistress from next door whom James Edwin had known all his life, trotting over the lawn towards the young man, the wire in her hand.

"It's come!" she shouted with that truculence in triumph which is typical of the East Country. "That's come, my little old boy! That's all right now, they're both on 'em safe. Telegram signed by someone called McBride."

"Both?" James Edwin demanded, the blood in him leaping.

"That's what it says," she said, laying a bony hand on his shoulder. "Now you goo down on your knees. That's a Mercy. None on us had any right to expect that."

James opened his eyes as he sat on the lawn at Farthing Hall back in the nineteenth century. His mind was still engrossed with James Edwin and Phoebe and the child who was safe, and the other child who had held out her arms to the wind. He remembered what he had said to James Edwin.

*"Somebody is doing all this. Somebody is stirring the bowl."*

The garden was still swimming about him. His heart was flickering and the great fear of Death was upon him. His thoughts were in confusion and he opened his eyes to their widest extent, trying at least to see the beech tree buds or the flowers that were like Dorothy, trying to catch and hold them, trying not to go. He

was so frightened that the sweat broke out on his forehead and his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth. It was in that moment that the kind earth to whom he belonged and of whom he was made, said to him in a singsong:

“God is your Father, but I am your mother, James. I am your mother, and I am remarkable. I am of infinite resource. I am kind, I am constant, I restore. I do magic, and I heal. I cleanse. There is nothing so vile that I cannot destroy it, nothing so dead that I cannot remould it. I am always young to-morrow and you are my darling, best beloved of all my children. Be not afraid of dying. You came from me and you will return to me, and I will re-fashion you, and your Father will breathe on you again. While you live you have purpose, while you live I have astonishment for you. While you live you have seed. While you live I am your servant, and when you die I will take care of you. What is eternal in you will go to your Father, what is mortal in you will come to me, and I will clean it and restore it and use it again. God is your Father, but I am your mother, and I love you too.”

James cried out aloud suddenly as the green and gold and blue burst into a blaze of light about his head.

“There,” mumbled the earth, fanning him with her cow’s breath. “There, there. Don’t be frightened. Never be afraid.”

When Debby came back with little Jeffrey from their walk in the village, the child ran over to his grandfather, and presently began to scream. By the time Debby came up to him he was in a panic and he threw his arms round her, clutching her bunchy skirts, his face hidden against the hard stomacher of her bodice.

Debby saw at once what had happened, and was not surprised, for they had been expecting it.

“He’s gone!” the child screamed, “he’s gone!”

“No, darling, he’s only asleep,” said Debby soothingly, but her voice was unsteady for she was frightened by Death too. “He’s only asleep. He’ll go away now and wake up and have a nice long day to-morrow. You’ll see.”

## A Note on the Author

Margery Louise Allingham was born in Ealing, London in 1904 to a very literary family; her parents were both writers, and her aunt ran a magazine, so it was natural that Margery too would begin writing at an early age. She wrote steadily through her school days, first in Colchester and later as a boarder at the Perse School for Girls in Cambridge, where she wrote, produced, and performed in a costume play. After her return to London in 1920 she enrolled at the Regent Street Polytechnic, where she studied drama and speech training in a successful attempt to overcome a childhood stammer. There she met Phillip Youngman Carter, who would become her husband and collaborator, designing the jackets for many of her future books.

The Allingham family retained a house on Mersea Island, a few miles from Layer Breton, and it was here that Margery found the material for her first novel, the adventure story *Blackkerchief Dick* (1923), which was published when she was just nineteen. She went on to pen multiple novels, some of which dealt with occult themes and some with mystery, as well as writing plays and stories – her first detective story, *The White Cottage Mystery*, was serialized in the *Daily Express* in 1927.

Allingham died at the age of 62, and her final novel, *A Cargo of Eagles*, was finished by her husband at her request and published posthumously in 1968.





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This electronic edition published in 2013 by Bloomsbury Reader  
Bloomsbury Reader is a division of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 50  
Bedford Square,  
London WC1B 3DP

First published in Great Britain 1943 by Michael Joseph Ltd

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eISBN: 9781448211692

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